

**CAN CHILDREN AND PARENTS READ HAPPILY
EVER AFTER? AN INVESTIGATION OF
EXTENSIVE READING IN TAIWAN**

BY

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the effect of extra-curricular English input for primary school learners in Taiwan, where English is spoken as a foreign language. Like many other countries, e.g. Japan, Korea and Mainland China, Taiwan started its primary English programme in the past ten years to improve English proficiency through an early start, yet there are reports of low achievement, slow progress and low parental satisfaction. A base-line and a pilot study showed that English learning in Taiwan is generally confined to the classroom and learners rarely receive input outside of school, apart from attending private language schools, which focus on cramming for exams. The main study considered extra-curricular input to increase the amount of exposure to English, which would be natural, enjoyable and accessible to children. This pointed to the use of English storybooks. The pilot study showed that young beginners need scaffolding in their learning, so the project involved parents to support reading with their children at home.

Participants were sixty-three Taiwanese primary school pupils and their parents from three classes in one state school, with three subgroups: a family reading group, an independent reading group and a control group. The study period was one academic semester. Apart from the control group, pupils in the family reading group and the independent reading group were directed to read with or without their parents at home. The method of investigation used for this study was qualitative in the form of questionnaires, proficiency tests, reading records, interviews and audio recordings of family reading from that subgroup, and quantitative in the form of tasks designed to measure improvement in the learners' proficiency in terms of vocabulary and morpho-syntax. The results showed that learners who read more slightly outperformed the non-readers in terms of morpho-syntax. The audio recordings showing interaction of the parents and children during reading demonstrated that further help is necessary for such an idea to work in practice. This study also reveals the difficulty of arranging a time for home reading between the parents and children and, in addition, points to the insufficient exposure to English for these Taiwanese young learners in their daily lives, which will continue to contribute to their slow progress, despite their age advantage.

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1	Introduction.....	1
1.1	Introduction.....	1
1.2	Outline of the thesis	2
Chapter 2	Literature Review	4
2.1	English for Young Learners as a Foreign Language in Primary Schools... 4	4
2.1.1	First language, second language and foreign language acquisition	4
2.1.2	The Age Factor and L2 development	7
2.2	The importance of input.....	19
2.2.1	Definition of input.....	20
2.2.2	Input vs. proficiency: Quantity and Source of input	22
2.3	Models of Provision.....	29
2.4	Extra-Curricular Input and Extensive Reading (ER).....	40
2.4.1	The importance of extra-curricular input	40
2.4.2	The Importance of L2 reading.....	43
2.5	Extensive Reading (ER).....	56
2.5.1	Definition and rationale.....	56
2.5.2	Children’s Books as Learning Media.....	68
2.5.3	Enhancement to the extra-curricular extensive reading programme– Family Literacy	74
Chapter 3	Context of the study	90
3.1	Primary English in Taiwan	90
3.1.1	General Guidelines of Grade 1-9 Curriculum of Elementary and Junior High School Education (GGGC) – English language for primary schools	92
3.1.2	Implementation	95
3.2	Issues and Problems identified in the literature.....	98
3.2.1	Limited class hours	99
3.2.2	Foreign language environment	99
3.2.3	Expectations of the general public.....	100
3.2.4	Myth of early advantages	101
3.2.5	Mixed-level classes	102
3.2.6	Education differences in urban and rural areas	102
3.2.7	Lack of equipment	103
3.2.8	Classroom language	104

3.3	The baseline survey.....	105
3.3.1	Methodology	106
3.3.2	Data Analysis	107
3.3.3	Results	108
3.3.4	Baseline survey findings and implications for the main study	113
3.4	What input can be provided through such a programme?	117
Chapter 4	Methodology	121
4.1	Overview of the study	121
4.2	Research questions and study design	121
4.3	Pilot study: <i>Reading Together – Parents and Children</i>	122
4.3.1	Purpose of the pilot study.....	122
4.3.2	Pilot study: Methodology	122
4.3.3	Methods of Data Collection.....	123
4.4	Main Study Methodology	139
4.5	Aims of the main study	139
4.6	Research hypotheses of the main study	140
4.7	Participants.....	143
4.8	Treatment.....	148
4.8.1	Procedure.....	148
4.8.2	Material.....	149
4.8.3	Instrument	151
Chapter 5	Results	176
5.1	Hypothesis 1: Home English extensive reading has a positive influence on the learners' attitude and changes behaviour.....	176
5.1.1	Hypothesis 1a: Home extensive reading has a positive effect on reading participants' (family readers and independent readers) attitude towards English reading.....	176
5.1.2	Hypothesis 1b: Home extensive reading project changes reading participants' (family readers and independent readers) behaviour, e.g. reading without stopping to check up unknown words.....	182
5.1.3	Hypothesis 1c: The total number of reading sessions and attitude are positively correlated.....	186
5.2	Hypothesis 2: Extra-curricular reading has a positive influence on primary learners' English proficiency.....	187
5.2.1	Hypothesis 2a: Reading improves learners' vocabulary.	187
5.2.2	Hypothesis 2b: Reading improves learners' morpho-syntactic ability ...	191

5.2.3	Hypothesis 2b-1: Reading improves learners' ability in jumbled sentences.	191
5.2.4	Hypothesis 2b-2: Picture description task and learners' morpho-syntax	193
5.2.5	Hypothesis 2c: Learners with a positive attitude have higher proficiency	227
5.3	Hypothesis 3: Parents will help provide English extra-curricular input at home.	229
5.3.1	Hypothesis 3a. Participants will achieve the expected reading length and frequency.	229
5.3.2	Hypothesis 3b. Parents will use interactive methods to read with their children.	230
5.3.3	Hypothesis 3c: Children enjoy reading with their parents.	245
5.3.4	Hypothesis 3d: Participants will be able to find books at their level and interest.	247
5.4	Major findings	257
Chapter 6	Conclusion	259
6.1	Discussion	259
6.1.1	Can 'home extensive reading' succeed in supplementing primary EFL instruction by providing more extra-curricular input?	259
6.1.2	Does home reading influence the learners' English proficiency?	261
6.1.3	How do the children (and parents) go about the task of reading?	264
6.2	Limitations and suggestions for future study	267
6.3	Conclusion	273
	References	276
	Appendix	323

List of Tables

Table 2.1	Input: learning versus only understanding.....	21
Table 2.2	Summary of current models of provision	30
Table 2.3	Benefits of Extensive Reading Programmes.....	59
Table 2.4	Summary of results of studies of successful extensive reading programmes.....	62
Table 3.1	Participants in the baseline study 2004.....	107
Table 3.2	Summary of baseline survey results for 'Teaching'	109
Table 3.3	Descriptive statistics of activeness.....	109
Table 3.4	Summary of baseline survey result for 'Attitude/Motivation'.....	110
Table 3.5	Summary of baseline survey results for 'Primary English Education'	111
Table 3.6	Summary of baseline survey results for 'English outside of the Classroom'	114
Table 4.1	Number of participants in the pilot study.....	128
Table 4.2	Pilot study – book list	130
Table 4.3	Comparison of the amount of books read before and after pilot study	135
Table 4.4	Research questions, hypotheses and methodology of the main study	142
Table 4.5	Descriptive data of main study participants.....	146
Table 4.6	Group details of the main study	147
Table 4.7	Validity and Reliability of questionnaire	155
Table 4.8	Features that correlate with the relative position of verb and object	165
Table 4.9	Organic Grammar: Criteria for stages in L2 English.....	172
Table 5.1	Group means of children's attitude in pre-/post treatment questionnaires – strong agreement.....	177
Table 5.2	Group means of children's attitude in pre-/post treatment questionnaires – average opinion.....	178
Table 5.3	Group means of parents' attitudes in pre-/post-treatment questionnaires – strong agreement.....	180
Table 5.4	Group means of parents' attitudes in pre-/post-treatment questionnaires – average opinion.....	180
Table 5.5	Group means of children's behaviour in pre-/post-treatment questionnaires -methods.....	183
Table 5.6	Group means of children's behaviour in pre-/post-treatment questionnaires – joint reading	183

Table 5.7	Group means of children's behaviour in pre-/post-treatment questionnaires - behaviour	184
Table 5.8	Group means of children's behaviour in pre-/post-treatment questionnaires - habit	184
Table 5.9	Pearson Correlation between Attitude and Total number of sessions	186
Table 5.10	Correlation of attitude and total number of session by group.....	187
Table 5.11	Correlation between vocabulary improvement and total number of sessions	190
Table 5.12	Pearson correlation between correct restructuring percentage and correct vocabulary percentage	192
Table 5.13	Correlation between sentence restructuring improvement and total number of sessions.....	192
Table 5.14	Sentence tense, type and frequency of correct answers in each test.	193
Table 5.15	Organic Grammar: Criteria for stages in L2 English.....	195
Table 5.16	Examples of OG levels	196
Table 5.17	Learners' OG stages at the pre-test and the criteria	203
Table 5.18	Totals of OG stages at the pre-test	204
Table 5.19	Number of improving cases (Organic Grammar criteria).....	205
Table 5.20	Raw numbers of verbs by three groups.....	209
Table 5.21	Ratio of non-finite to finite per learner at the three tests	213
Table 5.22	Comparison of numbers of copula be, auxiliary be and thematic verbs	219
Table 5.23	Means of numbers of copula <i>be</i> , auxiliary <i>be</i> and thematic verbs....	219
Table 5.24	Pearson correlation between correct vocabulary (pre-test) and total number of reading sessions - family and independent reading groups	226
Table 5.25	Pearson correlation between correct restructuring percentage (pre-test) and total number of reading sessions - family and independent reading groups.....	226
Table 5.26	Pearson correlation between OG stage (pre-test) and total number of reading sessions - family and independent reading groups	227
Table 5.27	Pearson correlation between attitude and measurement	228
Table 5.28	Possible relationships among proficiency, attitude and Total no. of reading.....	229
Table 5.29	Post-treatment questionnaire (family group)	245
Table 5.30	Book type, number of sight words and book OG level.....	248
Table 5.31	Learners' OG level and the levels of their book choices	249
Table 5.32	Book selection and total number of sessions	251

Table 5.33 Table of selection of right books and improvement..... 252

Table 5.34 Model Summary – Simultaneous multiple regression..... 254

Table 5.35 Model Summary – Stepwise multiple regression 254

Table 5.36 ANOVA - Stepwise multiple regression 255

Table 5.37 Coefficients - Stepwise multiple regression..... 255

List of Figures

Figure 2.1 A concept map of an extra-curricular English extensive reading programme at primary level in EFL context.....89

Figure 5.1 Number of verbs used in three tests of family reading group.....210

Figure 5.2 Number of verbs used in three tests of reading alone group.....211

Figure 5.3 Number of verbs used in three tests of control group.....211

Figure 5.4 Number of Non-Finite Verbs used in three tests of Family Reading Group.....213

Figure 5.5 Number of Finite Verbs used in three tests of Family Reading Group.....213

Figure 5.6 Number of Finite Verbs used in three tests of Reading Alone Group.....216

Figure 5.7 Number of Non-Finite Verbs used in three tests of Reading Alone Group.....216

Figure 5.8 Number of Finite Verb used in three tests of Control Group.....217

Figure 5.9 Number of Non-Finite Verbs used in three tests of Control Group217

Figure 5.10 Means of numbers of copula *be*, auxiliary *be* and thematic verbs (group level) in three tests.....221

Figure 5.11 Number of thematic verbs used in three tests 222

Figure 6.1 Example model.....274

1.1 Introduction

There is still no agreement among language specialists about the best age to start learning a second language (L2),¹ but there is now a worldwide trend to implement learning a second language from the primary level (Johnstone, 1994; McCloskey, Orr & Dolitsky, 2006). The trend seems to be mainly based on the beliefs about early advantages of young learners (section 2.1.2) and the necessary long-term exposure to a target language. Indeed, from the L2 literature, it is generally correct to say that younger learners have advantages.² We can also agree on the important role that input plays, where more is better (Krashen, 1985; 2004c; Mahadeo, 2003). However, there are different kinds of input, e.g. comprehensible and incomprehensible input (Krashen, 1981; 1982; 1985), and learners cannot progress without the right input (Krashen, 1985; Mahadeo, 2003). In addition, Sumdangdej (2007), after studying 80 first-year primary learners' pronunciation with different type of input (native and non-native teacher pronunciation), concluded that the different kinds of input had an influence on learners' pronunciation. Learning a second language is a complicated process, for many variables are involved and they are often entwined. Without a good portion of the right ingredients, it seems to be difficult for there to be a satisfactory outcome for L2 learners if the learning aim is to become ultimately nativelike.

In order to maximise total target language exposure throughout the learner's lifetime and provide learners with quality language input, countries around the world have started foreign language acquisition at the primary level in the past decade, hoping to take advantage of children's enhanced receptiveness to second language input. The target language for most East Asian countries, e.g. Taiwan, Japan, China and Korea, is English. Responding to international and parental pressure, Taiwan has followed the worldwide trend in introducing primary English: from the fifth grade (age 10-11) in 2001, and in 2005 lowered this to third grade (age 8-9). The outcome has been rather disappointing. According to Chang's (2003) evaluation of the primary English policy

¹ Lenneberg theorized that the acquisition of language is an innate process by biological factors which limit the critical period for language acquisition from roughly two years of age to puberty (Lenneberg, 1967). Researchers have debated the age at which lateralization actually occurs (see Johnson & Newport, 1989; Kinsbourne, 1975; Krashen, 1973; Lenneberg, 1967; Long, 1990). Seliger (1978) and Long (1990) proposed that there may be multiple critical periods for different aspects of language. See section 2.1.2 for more details on the Critical Period Hypothesis.

² Older learners also have their own advantage; they are generally considered more effective learners where the rate of acquisition is considered (Snow & Hoefnagel-Höhle, 1977; 1978). However, in the long run, when we consider ultimate attainment, older learners do not seem to have an advantage, e.g. Johnson and Newport (1989); DeKeyser and Larson-Hall (2005). Please see section 2.1.2 for details of early advantages of young learners.

in Taichung city and county from the parents' viewpoint, less than 20% of the respondents said they were satisfied with the outcome. One of the possible reasons for this is the insufficient input the learners receive in the context of learning English as a foreign language; Taiwanese learners' learning is confined to the classroom most of the time. Extra-curricular input not only hardly exists but it is seldom promoted, or even mentioned by anyone. This study explores how extra-curricular input can be provided for Taiwanese primary English learners through the combination of parental involvement and extensive reading. Both issues have received positive results separately (for parental involvement in learning, see Dunn, 1994; Smith, Shirley & Visser, 1996a; Solomon, 1990b; and for extensive reading research, see Day & Bamford, 1998; Mason & Krashen, 1997; Takase, 2003). The present study explores the contribution of both to the second language progress of a group of primary EFL learners, between the ages of ten and eleven (fifth graders).

1.2 Outline of the thesis

The body of this thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter two discusses the ideas behind the global trends in primary English learning, including the age factor and the Critical Period Hypothesis, followed by the key focus of this thesis, extra-curricular input. Providing extra-curricular input through reading is carefully examined from three perspectives: input in general, extra-curricular input, and the ideas behind the extensive family reading approach. First, the definition of input I use in this thesis is discussed. Then, the relationship between input and proficiency is presented. This section discusses the amount and type of input learners need. Next, a range of various primary foreign language programmes and policies from five countries is summarised to build a foundation of general knowledge on the implementation and evaluation of primary EFL (Johnstone, 1994; McCloskey *et al.*, 2006). In the final section, the role of extra-curricular input from second language reading (in this case, reading in English) is discussed. This section explains about why and how primary learners might read in English, what approach would be suitable to provide extra-curricular input they can use, what materials can reasonably be used, and how this idea for input provision can be implemented through parental involvement.

Chapter three contains information to understand the context of the study, Taiwan. In this chapter, the national Taiwanese curriculum, including the principles, curriculum goals, methodology and materials, is introduced, followed by discussion of the problems reported in the literature so far (e.g. Shi, 2005; Xie, 2002). Next, results from a baseline survey (needs analysis) exploring the real situation of Taiwanese

English education system from different perspectives, and which led to the refinement of the thesis topic is summarised. The final section in this chapter focuses on what kind of input an extensive reading programme can realistically provide to Taiwanese primary English learners.

Chapter four describes the methodology of the project. It includes two parts: the pilot study and the main study. These two parts are arranged in a similar pattern, including the participants, and the study instrument, and for the pilot study, the results that underpinned the main study.

Chapter five presents the study results. This chapter investigates the research hypotheses relating to provision of extra-curricular input, and looks at results on how reading implementation was dealt with, what impact it had on the participants and whether this project benefited the learners' English development. Data from questionnaires, proficiency tests including Organic Grammar (OG), and interviews were used together to test the research hypotheses. The final section of this chapter is devoted to the discussion of the results and their interpretation.

In the last chapter of this thesis, chapter six, a summary of the study is first presented for a quick review, followed by discussion of the answers given to the research questions. Then, the limitations of the study are discussed, followed by the implications of the research findings, hoping to make some contribution to future educationists, linguists and learners.

Appendices and references are included at the end of this thesis for the readers' convenience.

2.1 English for Young Learners as a Foreign Language in Primary Schools

In this chapter, the theories and empirical studies which provide the context on child first language acquisition (L1A) and second language acquisition (L2A) are first reviewed in order to understand child L2 acquisition. Since modern foreign language teaching at the primary level has become a worldwide trend, the assumed reasons behind this policy, the age factor, is also discussed. Then the chapter continues, covering the nature and importance of input in terms of what types of input might benefit primary foreign language learning. Short descriptions of programmes in a number of countries who have implemented primary English as a foreign language (EFL) are listed as models of provision. The chapter closes with the introduction of the rationale of the study design to provide extra-curricular input through extensive family reading to increase language proficiency.

2.1.1 First language, second language and foreign language acquisition

First, a clarification of the meaning of the term 'second' language and 'foreign' language is necessary. Under the definition I will use here, a second language (L2) is any language acquired later than the native language or mother tongue (L1), is thus distinct from bilingual L1A (whether simultaneous or consecutive bilingualism).³ Despite the difficulty in setting a clear cut-off point to show where first language acquisition ends and second language acquisition starts, several decades ago McLaughlin (1978) suggested that acquisition of more than one language up to age three should be considered simultaneous bilingualism (i.e. first language acquisition, L1A), and a successive (or consecutive) different language acquisition after the first language has been established can be termed L2 acquisition. Lakshmanan (1995) adopts the same age (three) while stating that this may be too early and that there are probably some complex properties still to be acquired at this age. Unsworth (2005) assumes a cut-off point of four years old in her study by assuming that most grammatical principles of the first language are in place by this age.

A conceptual distinction has to be made in the use of 'second' as opposed to 'foreign'

³ McLaughlin (1978) makes a distinction between simultaneous and successive acquisition of two languages: he speaks of 'simultaneous' acquisition of two languages when a child has been introduced to two languages before his or her third birthday and applies the term 'successive' acquisition of two languages to situations in which this criterion is not met. However, McLaughlin readily admits that the third birthday stipulation represents an arbitrary cut-off point (De Houwer, 1990).

language. In the case of second language acquisition, the language is used as a means of communication among people who speak some other language as their mother tongue, and therefore is usually learnt with much more environmental support than a foreign language. In contrast, a foreign language is non-native language learnt and used outside the target language (TL) country, e.g. English language learning in Taiwan,⁴ where most child learning of a second language refers to English learnt at school, as we will see in chapter three.

Research on language acquisition has been seeking to find out what makes children capable of learning their mother tongues so quickly and successfully. Linguists have been confronted with the questions whether this success can be duplicated, to what extent and why, when it comes to second language acquisition. In the field of second language acquisition, one of the most discussed issues since the 1980s is the L2 learner's access to Universal Grammar (UG), which is held to constrain all languages and their acquisition, primarily for children. Chomsky (1965; 1981a; 1986) made the argument that the human mind contains a limited set of rules for organizing language. In turn, there is an assumption that all languages have a common structural basis. Native speakers of a language know what utterances are grammatical in their language and what are not. The key puzzle is how children come to know the restrictions of their language, despite their lack of cognitive sophistication and a poverty of the stimulus while acquiring their mother tongue. The standard argument is that it is logically impossible for a child to acquire linguistic competence (based on Chomsky's 1965 notion of linguistic competence) of the complexity they do through the kinds of exposure to language that children receive in their home environment because the input is underdetermined and degenerate in the sense that it contains some properties which are not immediately obvious and are not explicitly taught, and may contain some ungrammaticalities and disfluencies which make it an inadequate source of information for language acquisition. One of the examples to be used for the 'poverty of stimulus' argument (also called 'the logical problem of L1 acquisition') is from the constraints on wh-movement. For example, consider the sentences in (1) (White, 1989:8-9):

⁴ It is customary to apply the following broad terms to situations in countries as well as to individual speakers, as in the case of English.

ENL: English as a native language (mother tongue/first language);

ESL: English as a second language;

EFL: English as a foreign language.

In recent years another category has been added by subdividing EFL into EFL proper and EIL (English as an international language). This means that English is referred to as EIL when used among non-native speakers and EFL when used by non-native speakers talking to native speakers (Mahadeo, 2003:124-126)

- (1) a. John saw a ghost.
- b. What did John see?
- c. What did Mary believe that John saw?
- d. *What did Mary believe the claim that John saw?
- e. Mary believed the claim that John saw a ghost.
- f. What did Mary believe that John claimed to have seen?

Sentences such as (1b) suggest to the learners that Wh-questions can be formed by moving the Wh direct object (who) to the front of the sentence. Therefore, the learner would be justified in assuming that this rule can be extended to complex sentences such as (1c), which is grammatical and to other complex sentences such as (1d), which is ungrammatical (violations of subadjacency principle of UG). The input data do not tell the child that sentences like (1d) are impossible; they are simply non-occurring. Other very similar questions like (1f) might be encountered. If children were extracting generalizations from the input, one would expect them to be misled by the possibility of sentences like (1a), (1b) or (1f) into thinking that sentences like (1d) are possible. Similar examples can be found in *wanna*-contraction, distribution of complementisers, pronouns, etc. White (1987a; 1987b) gives dative alternation as another example for the poverty of the stimulus. English permits two constructions with many dative verbs, as in the following examples:

- (2) a. John gave a book to Fred. [Noun Phrase (NP) + Prepositional Phrase (PP)]
- b. John gave Fred a book. [NP + NP]

However, other dative verbs permit only the NP + PP pattern:

- c. John donated some money to the students.
- d. *John donated the students some money.

Supposing the child works out that many verbs allow both patterns, how can the restriction on verbs like 'donate' be discovered? Again, positive evidence will not suffice, as the child has no way of knowing that sentences with NP + NP will not occur. White (1989) argues strongly that underdetermination of this kind is the main problem with a view that only looks at input as the impetus for language acquisition. Despite the problem of underdetermination, children arrive at the full complexity of adult knowledge with comparatively little difficulty, and without the range of errors that one might anticipate, suggesting that there must be certain innate restrictions, which is the language faculty or Universal Grammar (UG). The child must be

equipped with knowledge that enables the deficiencies of the input to be overcome.

If an innate, specialist language module (UG) exists in L1 acquisition, one logical possibility is that such innate mechanisms continue to operate during L2 acquisition as in L1 acquisition. If this is the case, whether there is a time when such mechanisms stop functioning is the next question. There have been debates in the area of L2 acquisition regarding whether it is constrained by UG or not (e.g. Bley-Vroman, 1989; Clahsen & Muysken, 1986; Flynn, 1987; Schachter, 1989; 1990; Schwartz, 1991; 1992; White, 1985; 1989; 1990/1991). Nonetheless, all researchers have come to the agreement that some of the processes characterising L1A may not apply to L2 acquisition in the same manner since L2 learners, even children, have knowledge of a previous language which surely affects their L2 acquisition endstate. The other common point of view regarding ultimate attainment of an L2 is that it can rarely be nativelike for adult learners. However, unlike adult L2 acquisition, it is generally believed that ultimate L2 attainment for children is much more often successful, i.e. nativelike (Felix, 1985; Felix, 1991; Johnson & Newport, 1989). This supports the view that a child's L2 grammar should be constrained by UG just like a child's L1 grammar (Mobaraki, 2007:2-3). This idea implies that there is a specific and limited time period for language acquisition, referred to as the *Critical Period Hypothesis* (CPH), which suggests that up to puberty a child's brain processes input differently to post-puberty.

2.1.2 The Age Factor and L2 development

The relationship between a learner's age and his or her potential achievement in L2 acquisition has always been under debate in one way or another. In their pioneering study, Penfield and Roberts (1959) argued that the optimum period for language acquisition falls within the first ten years of life, when the brain retains its plasticity. Penfield, partly on the basis of his scientific work as a neurosurgeon, found that children before puberty who suffer brain damage in the speech area of the cerebral cortex through accidents, brain tumours, and surgical intervention recover speech better than adolescents or adults. From this capacity of the young brain to compensate for the loss of the speech function (plasticity), Penfield inferred that the brain of a young child is much more receptive for the development of speech mechanisms than the adult's. This conviction led him to the view that exposure of young children to any language is in accordance with the biological timetable.

This belief of younger advantage ('younger = better') of language acquisition is found

in Lenneberg's (1967) 'critical period hypothesis' (CPH) (cf. sensitive period),⁵ according to which there is a fixed span of years during which language learning can take place naturally and effortlessly, and after which it is not possible to be completely successful. Lenneberg theorized that the acquisition of language is an innate process determined by biological factors which limit the critical period of a language from roughly two years of age to puberty. He believed that after 'lateralization' (a process by which the two hemispheres of the brain develop specialized functions), the brain loses plasticity and claimed that lateralization of the language function is normally completed at puberty, making post-adolescent language acquisition difficult.⁶

Automatic acquisition from mere exposure to a given language seems to disappear [after puberty], and foreign languages have to be taught and learned through a conscious and labored effort. Foreign accents cannot be overcome easily after puberty. However, a person can learn at the age of forty. This does not trouble our basic hypothesis [...]. (Lenneberg, 1967:176)

More recently, Chugani and Phelps (1996) used PET (Positron Emission Tomography) scans of the brain to show that energy gathers in different parts of the brain when one grows up. They also report that synapses (connections between neurons, i.e. brain cells) develop considerably by the age of ten and then gradually decrease. This increase of synapses results in the strong energy on PET scans and shows that the energy is concentrated in memory and language areas. It might imply that people have a better ability to acquire or learn languages up to age ten, during which synapses rapidly increase. Because this period resembles the golden age of language learning and cognition, Wolfe and Bradt (1998) called it the 'Window of opportunity' (Kuo & Kuo, 2001; Xie, 2002).

Early studies tested the critical period hypothesis by comparing children to adults in

⁵ The distinction between a 'critical' and a 'sensitive' period rests on whether completely successful acquisition is deemed to be only possible within a given span of a learner's life, or whether acquisition is just easier within this period. Long (1990) and Seliger (1978) proposed that there may be multiple critical/sensitive periods for different aspects of language. The period during which a native accent is easily acquirable appears to end sooner than the period governing the acquisition of a native grammar.

⁶ Researchers have debated the age at which lateralization actually occurs. Kinsbourne (1975) proposes completion by birth; Krashen (1973) suggests it may be complete by age 5; Long (1990) at age 6; Dekeyser (2000) and Johnson & Newport (1989) propose at age 7; Penfield & Roberts (1959) propose at age 9 and Lenneberg (1967) proposed lateralization by puberty. Long (1990) suggests that the brain's loss of plasticity is due to aspects of cerebral maturation unrelated to lateralization. Scovel (1981) argued that there is no evidence to support Long and argues simply for a pre-puberty start. Regardless of the exact timing of lateralization or other factors, evidence is very strong that most people who acquire a second language after puberty retain an accent in the second language.

the acquisition of pronunciation. Studies examining subjects' pronunciation after over five years of exposure to the second language consistently found that the large majority of adults retain their accent when the second language is acquired after puberty, whereas children initiating second language acquisition before puberty have little or no foreign accent (e.g. Asher & Garcia, 1969; Oyama, 1976; Selinger, Krashen & Ladefoged, 1975; Tahta, Wood & Loewenthal, 1981). Two studies assessing learners' acquisition of pronunciation after three years of exposure to the second language found that younger learners had retained more accent-free pronunciation when compared to adolescents just past puberty (e.g. Fathman, 1975; Williams, 1979).

Fewer studies have investigated the effect of age on grammar learning (e.g., Coppieters, 1987; DeKeyser, 2000; Goldschneider & DeKeyser, 2001; Johnson, 1992; 1989; Johnson & Newport, 1991; Patkowski, 1980; Schachter, 1990; Sorace, 1993). Among studies regarding learners' ultimate attainment in morpho-syntax, Patkowski (1980) hypothesized that, even if accent were ignored, only those who had begun learning their L2 before the age of 15 could ever achieve full nativelike mastery, including grammar, of that language. He obtained global syntactic proficiency ratings for 67 nonnative speakers of English. He had native-speaking judges rate the subjects on the basis of written transcripts corresponding to 5-minute recorded segments, thereby avoiding a confounding influence of accent. Subjects who had been exposed to English before age 15 received much higher ratings on average than those who arrived in the United States after age 15. The 'pre-puberty' group showed a strong ceiling effect, whereas the ratings for the 'post-puberty' group were normally distributed. The results for a grammaticality judgment test administered to the subjects were essentially the same as for the syntax ratings. Patkowski also examined other factors which might be as good as age in predicting or explaining a learner's eventual success, e.g. the total amount of time a speaker had been in the US as well as the amount of formal ESL instruction the learner had had. Although a relationship between these factors and the learners' success was observed, it often turned out that age was so closely related to the other factors that it was not really possible to separate them completely. For example, length of residence in the US sometimes seemed to be a fairly good predictor. While it was true that a person who had lived in the country for 15 years might speak better than one who had been there for only 10 years, it was often the case that the one with longer residence had also arrived at an earlier age. However, a person who had arrived in the U.S. at the age of 18 and had lived there for 20 years did not score significantly better than someone who had arrived at the age of 18 but had only lived there for 10 years. Similarly, the amount of instruction, when

separated from age, did not predict success to the extent as the age of immigration.

In addition to oral production data, many researchers have used grammaticality judgment tests, where the ability to distinguish between grammatical and ungrammatical sentences in an L2 is measured because it provides a means to assess the learners' reactions to sentence types that only occur rarely in spontaneous speech, obtain negative evidence on strings of words that are not part of the language, distinguish production problems (e.g., slips and unfinished utterances) from grammatical production and isolate the structural properties of the language that are of interest by minimizing the influence of the communicative and representational functions of the language (Schütze, 1996). Neither elicited production tasks nor naturalistic data collection provides a means to accomplish the above (Tremblay, 2005). Johnson and Newport (1989) administered a grammaticality judgement test with orally presented sentences, covering a wide variety of basic morpho-syntactic structures of English, to a group of 46 native speakers of Chinese and Korean who had immigrated to the U.S. at various ages (3-39). When compared to age, they found a decline in the correctness of judgements. The correlation between the age of arrival and test score was $-.77$ for all the subjects together and $-.87$ for those who arrived before age 17. Individual elements of grammar varied widely in their correlation with age, even though this correlation was significant for all 12 sentence types examined. This study supports the hypothesis that there is a critical period for attaining full nativelike mastery of a second language. A reanalysis of Johnson and Newport's data by Bialystok and Hakuta (1994), however, revealed some serious problems with their interpretation. Bialystok and Hakuta argue that the data show a discontinuity not at puberty but rather at 20, and that there is statistically significant evidence for a continued decline in L2 acquisition well into adulthood.

There is thus still some debate about the optimal age of learning and whether a critical period exists that ends around puberty. A number of research studies also show that in naturalistic settings in the target language country, older L2 learners are better than younger ones in their rate of acquisition at the early stages (Cummins, 1981; Ervin-Tripp, 1974; Sinh, 2006; Snow & Hoefnagel-Höhle, 1977; 1978) or initially have an advantage of rate in certain areas; for instance, listening comprehension (Ervin-Tripp, 1974), morphological and syntactic development (Krashen, Long & Scarcella, 1979) and pronunciation (Olson & Samuels, 1973; Fathman, 1975), presumably due to their matured cognition (Burstall, Jamieson, Cohen & Hargreaves, 1974; Cummins, 1981; García Mayo, 2003; Sinh, 2006). Also, greater academic demands placed on the learners by the schools to encourage higher motivation (Snow

& Hoefnagel-Höhle, 1978), and verbal interaction in negotiation (Scarcella & Higa, 1982). However, counter-evidence shows younger learners eventually outperform older ones in pronunciation (Asher & Garcia, 1969; Oyama, 1976; Scovel, 1988) and in general surpass older learners (Krashen, Scarcella & Long, 1982). Second language acquisition studies found an earlier start produces higher L2 ultimate attainment in nativelike pronunciation (Oyama, 1976; Seliger, Krashen & Ladefoged, 1982), listening comprehension (Oyama, 1978), syntax (Patkowski, 1980, see above) and general proficiency (Arnold, 2007). Although the issue still remains controversial, there seems to be a consensus among language acquisition researchers that pre-puberty naturalistic second/foreign language learners always acquire higher (nearer-native) competence. Can instructed pre-puberty learners achieve such high levels of attainment?

CPH in Formal/Instruction context

Following the suggestion, derived from CPH, of better ultimate attainment for younger starters, many researchers have investigated the effects of starting an L2 early in primary school on levels of attainment. Since the 1960s, this has involved projects in different parts of the world, for example, on immersion programmes in Canada, on the introduction of foreign languages at primary school level in Sweden, and on the introduction of French in Britain. However, as we will see, researchers have often arrived at different conclusions. I will discuss the programmes on which learners received the most L2 exposure to those where they received the least, and their implications.

More than three decades ago, in 1965, a well-researched experiment began in a St. Lambert, Quebec kindergarten which refined our understanding of how languages are learned and how they can be successfully taught (Lambert & Tucker, 1972). On this early French immersion programme (EFI), members of the majority language group (native speakers of English) were educated through the medium of French, the language of the minority group in Canada.⁷ The programme had three basic assumptions about L2 acquisition. Firstly, young humans are naturally equipped to acquire language incidentally as they hear it in the context of daily activities, but this ability gradually diminishes as children grow older. Secondly, to become fluent, children need very frequent and varied exposure to the L2 for an extended period of time. One of the greatest obstacles to the success of most (non-immersion) school language programmes lies in the limited amount of time which can be devoted to

⁷ EFI has become a model and been adapted to many alternative forms of immersion.

language instruction. Thirdly, language should not be taught formally as a system, but rather should be made available to learners in the context of activities which engage their interest and which require language comprehension – and eventually – production. Thus, ideal conditions for L2 learning, derived from immersion programmes, to be incorporated into school instruction were: 1) an early start – as early as possible; 2) intensive, contextualized exposure to monolingual use of the L2 over a period of years, and 3) motivating activities which engage the learner in understanding and using the TL (Wesche, 2002:358).

The pattern of outcomes for early immersion programmes elsewhere in Canada has been highly consistent with the results of the St. Lambert programme (Genesee, 1987; Halsall, 1989; Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Lapkin, Hart & Swain, 1991). With respect to French L2 learning, early immersion results are very positive when compared with other school language programmes. During their primary school years, EFI children develop highly functional academic and social language skills in both oral and written French which allow them to do their schoolwork at their age and grade level, and which in the case of listening and reading approach native speaker norms by the end of primary school. In the long run, these skills have been shown to be quite robust (Wesche, 1993). All types of French immersion programmes consistently lead to stronger French proficiency in all skills than do traditional (forty minutes per day) French programmes. Both the early starting age and the total amount of exposure (which is far greater than traditional L2 programmes) appear to contribute to this result. (Edwards, 1989; Genesee, 1978; Halsall, 1989; Lapkin *et al.*, 1991; Swain, 1981a; Wesche, 2002). Thus EFI was suggested to be the most effective means of school L2 instruction, when compared with other school programmes (Laurén, 1994).

The success of EFI inspired the establishment of other forms of French immersion in Canada, including ‘middle’ or ‘delayed’ entry (MFI) (starting at grade 4, age 9), and ‘late’ entry (LFI) (starting at grade 6 or 7, age 11-12). Because of the different entry points in these immersion programmes, researchers are able to see the role the age factor plays. Wesche, Toews-Janzen and MacFarlane (1996) review some forty studies comparing early and later starting ages (EFI, MFI and LFI) for Canadian French immersion programmes and find that with respect to language outcomes, through grade 8/9, learners in each of the three programmes are successful in mastering levels of functional French proficiency which far outdistance levels gained in regular (40-60 minute/day) programmes. As would be expected from the relatively longer intensive exposure to French, EFI students generally outperform MFI students, and MFI students tend to outperform LFI students. EFI students tend to have an

advantage in message focused, face-to-face oral language use, and to report higher self-confidence in using the language. In spite of the advantages for EFI, many MFI and LFI students catch up to both EFI averages by grade 8 on reading and written grammar measure. This is perhaps due to self-selection for such programmes by students already successful in regular French programmes and overall school achievement, and to greater pedagogical emphasis on analytical instruction and use of written materials with these groups (Dicks, 1992). In a replicated study of EFI and LFI students who were subsequently placed together in bilingual secondary programmes from grades 9-12, no measurable group difference in French language skills were found by graduation (Wesche, 1993). Even so, graduating EFI students tended to retain higher self-confidence than LFI students in their oral language abilities. Wesche (2002) concluded while all three starting ages for immersion programmes appear to improve L2 achievement, EFI retains some important advantages. However, it is difficult to conclude whether it is the early starting age or the total amount of exposure which contributes to these advantages.

Researchers have been examining such programmes from various perspectives and have arrived at different conclusions, due perhaps to the different measurements. For instance, Adiv (1980) and Genesee (1979) found that in the long run students in an early immersion programme starting in kindergarten did not outperform those who entered a two-year late immersion programme in grade seven, with 85% of the day in French in grades 7 and 8. They also indicated, in the same studies, that the early immersion students did maintain a lead in grade 11 over students from a one-year late immersion programme that consisted of 85% in French in grade 7 followed by 40% each year thereafter, suggesting that in this case, the early immersion students benefited from the greater overall exposure they had received (cited in Harley, 1986:38). Swain (1981b) reported that in grade 10 of a late immersion programme, a group of students performed as well as grade 8 early total immersion students on a French cloze test and even better than the early immersion students in a French reading comprehension. At the time of testing, the younger early-immersion students in grade 8 had received more than twice as much French as the late immersion students in grade 10. However, on a somewhat less academic test of listening comprehension, involving taped excerpts of natural spoken discourse (e.g. from the radio), the early immersion students' performance was superior to that of the older late-immersion students. Harley (1986) investigated the levels of attainment of children in French bilingual programmes in Canada. She focused on the learners' acquisition of the French verb system, obtaining data from interviews, a story repetition task, and a translation task. She compared early (6-7 years old) and late

(14-15 years old) immersion students after both had received 1,000 hours of instruction. Neither group had acquired full control of the verb system, but the older students demonstrated greater overall control. However, the early immersion group showed higher levels of attainment at the end of their schooling, a result that may reflect the additional number of years' instruction they had received rather than the starting age.

The relationship between course intensity and length and L2 achievement has been investigated through different immersion programmes in Canada too. A variety of so-called 'partial immersion' options has also been tried, such as 50/50 programmes with half the instruction in the L1 and half in the L2 (alternating the instructional language between mornings and afternoons, or every second day), and 75-minute a day 'extended' French programmes similar to many U.S. partial immersion programmes. Such programmes make it possible to explore the importance of the intensity of instruction, and the question of how much L2 exposure is needed to ensure adequate language development for learners to be able to maintain grade level learning in their other academic studies. One Ottawa area school board ran a 50/50 EFI programme in all its 23 primary schools from the early 1970s to 1997 (Ottawa Roman Catholic Separate School Board (ORCSSB), 1993; 1995). This early partial immersion programme involved equal use of English and French as instructional languages from kindergarten/grade one through to grade six, with middle school and secondary school follow up programmes. French and English were used with different subjects. Instructional time totaled 2,925 hours by the end of grade 6 (as compared with approximately 4,680 for EFI). The students' French language results at the end of primary school were between those of 75-minutes/day extended programmes and those for EFI. The finding demonstrated that a second language can be effectively taught in 50/50 programmes, but that gains compared to early total immersion will be lower (Wesche, 2002).

In the mid-1990s, the Ottawa Board of Education tried an experimental one-year, half-day French programme in one school for a class of grade 5/6 students, called the 'language bath'. Its purpose was to improve students' French oral skills and self-confidence for those who had spent 40 minutes per day of Core French throughout primary school. The language bath programme increased exposure to French from the 120 hour Core programme to 450 hours for one school year, after which the students were to return to regular Core instruction. The hope was that an 'intensive dose' of French would lead to long-term improvement of Core French programme outcomes. Students spent half their day in French, working within the

French L2 curriculum and carrying out certain school activities (e.g., music, recreation). Academic subjects, however, including English, maths, and science, were taught in English. In an evaluation of two cohorts in this programme, the students' French listening and speaking skills improved notably during their language bath year, in marked contrast to a comparison group in 40 minutes a day of French instruction (Wesche, MacFarlane & Peters, 1994). Their self-reported enthusiasm for French study also increased, as well as self-confidence in using French to communicate in the classroom.

In Quebec, similar one or two-semester intensive English programmes at the end of primary school to support Core English programmes have been well researched and showed similar short term results (Lightbown & Spada, 1994). In addition, follow-up studies in secondary schools confirm that the L2 abilities developed in these programmes are well established, so that students who have had them continue to perform better than students who have not. In other words, a substantial period of intensive second language exposure builds fluency which is maintained once students return to the regular programme (Lightbown & Spada, 1994). Collins *et al.* (1999) report on intensive English outcomes for a programme format in which the regular French medium school instruction is confined to five months and the remainder of the school year is spent with students immersed in communicative English activities. Compared with a model in which regular instruction in both languages is spread over 10 years, the intensive dose led to superior English learning outcomes for the massed learning conditions. Like the comparative outcomes of early total immersion versus a 50/50 format, the 'language bath' experience in both French and English as second languages confirms the value of more intensive use of the number of hours that are available for language teaching in school programmes.

Wesche (2002) concluded with the features of the Canadian immersion programmes which can be adapted to other instructed contexts. Firstly, a younger start in a communication-oriented programme will generally be advantageous for children whose L1 is well established and continues to develop. Secondly, an intensive dose of immersion in a language is generally more effective for learning it than the same dose spread over a longer time. Even if it is a brief intervention of only a few months, an intensive dose can give students an advantage which makes subsequent low intensity instruction more effective. The total amount of exposure time to a language is also very important; it takes a long time to learn a language well.⁸ Next, highly motivated

⁸ Total cumulative exposure time is a crude measure; what really counts is 'time on task', or time spent actively learning and using the language in varied ways (Wesche, 2002).

communication opportunities in the language are vital to the development of proficiency and activities which encourage language analysis and attention to form can increase accuracy when carried out in contexts of communication (Swain, 2001; Wesche, 2002). Non-immersion intensive programmes may use other kinds of substantive communicative activities effectively in a school setting, especially for less intensive or shorter-term intervention. In addition, linguistic and pedagogical adaptation to accommodate learners' limited language ability appears essential to success in such programmes. Finally, contextual factors can have an influence on learning outcomes. The relative socio-linguistic status of the attention to such programmes will determine the availability of resources, parental support and ongoing political support, and thus be related to long-term learner motivation.

How does this shed light on non-intensive programmes? Let us look more closely at the context of formal foreign language instruction. Generally speaking, schools cannot offer an immense number of hours for L2, but only treat FL learning simply as one school subject among many. Researchers have been investigating non-intensive primary foreign language programmes worldwide. For example, the most far-reaching and well-known experiment in Britain of FL in the primary schools was the 'Pilot Scheme', launched in March 1963 by the Ministry of Education for the teaching of French in primary schools. The principal aim of this study was to study the feasibility of introducing French at an earlier age, i.e. at the age of eight, as opposed to the more conventional pattern of teaching a foreign language from the age of eleven. 125 primary schools in England and Wales participated in the scheme. The long-term evaluation of the scheme was undertaken by the National Foundation for Education Research (NFER). Two interim reports, *French from Eight: A national Experiment* (Burstall, 1968) and *French in the Primary School: Attitudes and Achievement* (Burstall, 1970), and the final report, *Primary French in the Balance* (Burstall *et al.*, 1974), provided the assessment of this ten-year experiment.

According to NFER's report, compared with those students who received foreign language education from the age of eleven, 'learners taught French from the age of eight do not subsequently reveal any 'substantial' gains in achievement' (Burstall *et al.*, 1974:243). By the age of sixteen, the only area that the early starters are superior in is that of listening comprehension. Learners who are taught French from the age of eight appear to maintain a more favourable attitude towards speaking the language than those who start from eleven. This finding supports the notion that younger learners have an advantage over older learners in acquiring spoken proficiency in a foreign language in relation to affective factors.

Similar results to NFER were obtained by Ekstrand (1978) in his investigation. He compared four groups of Swedish school children, aged 8, 9, 10 and 11, who had been taught English L2 in ten-minute sessions twice a week. An audiovisual method with sound tapes was used in which the teacher's role was restricted solely to that of handling the apparatus. When, after 18 weeks, the groups were tested for pronunciation (a taped imitation task) and comprehension (a taped translation task), the performance of the children was found to increase almost linearly with age.

The NFER French test results show that, on the whole, given the same amount of time studying French, primary school learners who are introduced to the study of French at the age of eleven, reach a higher level of achievement in all other aspects of proficiency in French than early starters. That is, older learners tend to be more proficient than younger ones in learning a foreign language. This evidence seems to run counter to Penfield's critical period hypothesis (Burstall *et al.*, 1974:121), but goes with along with Stern's claim that early non-intensive foreign language education cannot guarantee achievement later on (Stern, 1976; Stern & Weinrib, 1977). However, these findings and their interpretations by investigators have been questioned (e.g. Bennett, 1975; Buckby, 1976; Marinova-Todd, Marshall & Snow, 2000; Spicer, 1980) and discussed (e.g. Hyltenstam & Abrahamson, 2001), as we will see.

Evidence in the 1970s was thus inconclusive in terms of the advantage of a younger starting age; however, after a few decades of research on primary modern foreign language programmes, some implications were drawn by researchers. For example, studies tended to show that older starters are more efficient learners (Burstall *et al.*, 1974; Carroll, 1975; García Mayo, 2003) than younger starters and that the real advantage of an early start is that it allows more time for L2 learning and more exposure to TL over the course of acquisition (Burstall *et al.*, 1974; Carroll, 1969; Carroll, 1975; García Mayo, 2003), similar to the above results of immersion programmes.

Exposure to the target language is one of the differences between immersion and MFL programmes, which is also one of the most important factors in L2 development (Wesche, 2002). Nativelike levels can be attained through acquiring (in Krashen's sense) a second language at a young age because of the use of implicit language-learning mechanisms. These seem to require massive exposure to the language, so the level of exposure is crucial at this age (DeKeyser, 2000). If schools do not provide a high level of exposure, young children may be deprived of this

natural advantage and primary English programmes do not realise possible benefits. While some researchers have realised that an early start to a second/foreign language does not guarantee success because of many other relevant factors (García Mayo, 2003; Stern, 1976; Stern & Weinrib, 1977), others have also made suggestions on contents and pedagogy (García Mayo, 2003; Hyltenstam & Abrahamson, 2001; Marinova-Todd *et al.*, 2000; Muñoz, 2003). Muñoz, (2003) argues that in order to enhance foreign language learning in a school setting, changes that guarantee sufficient exposure to and meaningful interaction in the target language have to be implemented. Similarly, García Mayo (2003) points out that the early introduction of the English language in classroom settings will not lead to appropriate results if instructional hours are not used effectively where there is no increase in the number of hours of exposure. On effective use of instruction hours, she argues that the language should be used as a means of instruction and communication in class: students should be given the opportunity to have communicative and meaningful interaction. Regarding the increase in hours of exposure, she suggests content-based teaching, where some academic subjects could be taught in the L2. However, content-based instruction is not always an option where English is taught as a foreign language (as a school subject), which means that the amount of input learners are exposed to often remains far less than the amount required for acquisition, and the results continue to be unsatisfactory.

When considering the time required for L2 learning and the ultimate success achieved in the L2 separately, some researchers have suggested a compromise conclusion that *older is faster but younger is ultimately better* (Krashen *et al.*, 1979). Older learners could utilize their more mature cognition to help learning and thus their linguistic performance could be superior to younger starters. However, younger learners seem to reach higher levels of proficiency in the long run, which could be accounted for by their access to UG (see section 2.1.1), more input resulting from longer total exposure, better affect or more intensive exposure, as stated above. In short, the results from studies of immersion and foreign language programmes show that the amount of exposure is the most important variable in instructed settings, rather than the actual age of starting but even very short interventions can have an influence on language learners' later achievement. Yet primary foreign language programmes have been started worldwide without consideration of type or amount of input.

2.2 The importance of input

Krashen (1981; 1985; 1989) saw successful acquisition as being closely bound to the nature of the language input which learners receive. From the above section, we see there are certain conditions under which L2 acquisition takes place, where one assumes UG is available to children, length and intensity of exposure are crucial (García Mayo, 2003) as is pedagogy (Swain, 2001). Instructed learning is not necessarily effective (Krashen, 1982; 2005d; Schwartz, 1993; White, 1991) and the reason given for this is the modularity of mind.

Krashen (1982) identifies two types of linguistic knowledge in L2A. ‘Acquisition’ occurs automatically when the learner engages in natural communication where the focus is on meaning and where there is comprehensible input. ‘Learning’ occurs as a result of study where the learner is focused on the formal properties of the L2. ‘Acquired’ knowledge consists of subconscious L2 rules which the learner can call upon automatically; ‘learnt’ knowledge consists of metalinguistic knowledge which can only be used to monitor output generated by means of ‘acquired’ knowledge. Krashen argues that the two types of knowledge are entirely separate and unrelated. This position has become known as the ‘non-interface position’ which emanates from the learning/acquisition hypothesis of Krashen’s Monitor Theory and the modularity of mind.⁹ After investigating the effects of instruction on adverb placement, White (1991) argues that it is very likely that the knowledge her subjects gained from instruction was conscious rather than unconscious, and that it never became part of the learner’s underlying interlanguage (IL) grammar. Interlanguage grammar is an emerging linguistic system that has been developed by a L2 learner who has not become fully proficient yet but is approximating the target language with traces of L1 features (Selinker, 1972). Indeed, a follow-up study, conducted exactly one year after the original teaching, suggested that most of what the subjects learned was not retained in the long-term, i.e. that the instruction did not have lasting effects on their internalized competence. Schwartz (1993) also argues that there is no mechanism which can translate instruction knowledge (e.g. negative evidence, page 27) into input of the type required by UG and thus instruction has little impact on structure under UG because it changes (temporarily) only language behaviour and not IL grammars. Generative theorists (e.g. Chomsky, 1981b; Fodor, 1983; White, 1981) claim that speakers possess a language module that is independent of other cognitive systems such as those responsible for perception, problem-solving or memorization. The evidence cited in support of this claim comes from the nature of the principles and

⁹ For example, Gregg (1984) and McLaughlin (1987).

parameters of UG. Fodor (1983) proposed that the mind is not a uniform system but rather contains, in addition to a largely general-purpose central possessing system (responsible for such functions as memory, beliefs, reasoning, etc.), a set of autonomous systems or modules that function largely independent of one another. For Fodor, language is one such module, as it is for Chomsky (e.g. 1986). A modularist position sees language knowledge as a separate module from, for example, general knowledge of the world, and hence sees language acquisition as essentially different in character from the acquisition of real-world knowledge, including knowledge 'about' language. As a result, only the suitable target language data can be processed in the language module; learning/instruction is not always effective. This is even more applicable to child learners than to adults.

Since the amount and type of input constrains L2 acquisition, there is a need to maximize exposure and upgrade the quality of input because primary foreign language teaching policy is likely to otherwise result in poor outcome. Now the next issue to consider is the appropriate quantity and to define quality of input. After a critical review of the literature on the acquisition of L2 morpho-syntax and the critical period hypothesis, Marinova-Todd (2003:66) argued that the issue is not whether there is a critical period but, in addition to age of first exposure to an L2, what are the factors that contribute to proficiency. Therefore, the main focus should shift from providing *early* FL instruction to a more *quality-oriented* FL instruction. Due to the paramount importance of input, section 2.2 will be devoted to a review on input, where I start with a short section on the definition of input, before discussing further studies and arguments.

2.2.1 Definition of input

The basic meaning of input in language acquisition research is *language data (utterances, texts) which the learner is exposed to*, that is, the learner's experience of *the target language in all its various manifestations*. It does not include explanations and rules concerning language but just samples of language conveying messages¹⁰ (Sharwood Smith, 1994:8). Although input may remain the same in nature, learners will, on a given occasion, only attend to some elements in the speech or text, process them, and acquire some knowledge about the L2. On a different occasion, the same learners may not do so (Carroll, 2001:8). Sharwood Smith (1994:8) defines 'input' in the sense of *potentially processible language data made available to the learner*. The part of input which has actually been processed by the learner and turned into

¹⁰ This refers to 'primary linguistic data' (PLD) in generative linguistics.

knowledge of some kind is ‘intake’ (Corder, 1981). Carroll (2001:8) also holds a similar view: *it is some processed stimulus*. Schmidt (1990), with respect to older learners, proposes that intake is the part of the input that the learner notices. While the concept of intake is crucial in L2 acquisition, there is no consensus on its definition. Krashen apparently considers intake to be synonymous with comprehensible input (see section 2.2.2.3 for details on comprehensible input), simply ‘that subset of linguistic input that helps the acquirer acquire language (Krashen, 1981:102), an external variable, which is quite different from Corder’s original definition of intake:

... input is ‘what goes in’ not what is *available* for going in, and we may reasonably suppose that it is the learner who controls this input, or more properly his intake. This may well be determined by the characteristics of his language acquisition mechanism...(Corder, 1967:165)

It is also important to recognise that language proficiency either develops as a response to input or fails to grow despite that input. That is, learners may be exposed to target forms that could in principle force them to reorganise their interlanguage system but in fact do not bring about any change. Their interlanguage system may lead to negative statements like ‘I *no must* do it’. Being exposed to ‘I *must not* do it’ may not necessarily bring about a change in that system. They may have processed the utterance simply for meaning and not noticed and stored the different structure manifest in the input: their Language Acquisition Device has not related to the input. It has not become intake. Sharwood Smith gives two examples in the following table for this (using the asterisk ‘*’ to indicate ‘nonnative’ forms).

From the output in Table 2.1, we see that part of the relevant input has become intake. The learner can form negative statements and can use the verb ‘run’ with past meaning. However, what has been ignored is the position of ‘not’ in the first example and the irregular past form of ‘run.’ The learner has processed this part of the input according to his or her own interlanguage system. Nevertheless, s/he has probably achieved 100 percent comprehension of the messages despite the fact that the system has not been adjusted to produce exactly what was heard (Sharwood Smith, 1994:9-10).

Table 2.1 Input: learning versus only understanding (from Sharewood Smith 1994:9)

Input	Understood?	Learned?	Output
‘I must not do it’	yes	no	*‘I no must do it’
‘I ran there’	yes	no	*‘I runned there’

In other words, even if input is understood, it may not be processed by the learner's internal mechanisms. That is what Krashen meant when he stated that comprehensible input is not a 'sufficient' condition for L2 acquisition. It is only when input becomes intake that acquisition, by definition, takes place (Ellis, 1985:159; Carroll, 2001:8). Schmidt (1990) argues that it makes no difference whether a learner notices a linguistic form in input because he or she was deliberately attending to form, or purely inadvertently. If noticed, input becomes intake. When this takes place, the learner processes the input unconsciously, which means the form is acquired, and thus interlanguage competence is restructured.

2.2.2 Input vs. proficiency: Quantity and Source of input

This section discusses what learners need in order to attain high levels of proficiency under two important conditions: maximum exposure and appropriate input quality.

2.2.2.1 The more the better

Whether 'earlier is better' is still under controversy, as noted above. An early start to a second/foreign language does not guarantee success because many other factors are also relevant, including contact with the target language and culture as well as individual differences, learner attitude and motivation, fall under input, learning strategies and classroom methodology, and the social value of the target language, as discussed in the SLA literature. In section 2.1.2, I have argued that the most important factor is ample exposure to the target language. An early start might therefore only mean that the learners will have more exposure to the target language in the long run (Carroll, 1969). Although L2 acquisition researchers agree about very little when it comes to explaining the how and why of L2 acquisition, one point on which there is consensus is that L2 acquisition requires exposure to the second language. As Carroll (2001:2) notes, if you want to learn Ojibwa, you will have to listen to Ojibwa speech, read Ojibwa texts, and attempt to reproduce Ojibwa L2 sentences. Learners have to work at learning, and learning requires exposure to the sounds or written forms of the L2. From these sounds and written symbols, learners must construct grammatical representations of the speech they are hearing or reading and infer a meaning. More exposure means more time and sometimes it is very difficult to allocate time in busy schedules, especially in school settings.

2.2.2.2 Context and Input

In terms of learning context, some researchers believe that learners reach higher proficiency in a naturalistic environment (d'Anglejan, 1978; Ioup, 1995; Schinke-Llano, 1990), while others argue for the power of instruction. Input in these two contexts might be different in essence (Lightbown & Spada, 1993), but it does not mean that acquisition cannot take place in a formal classroom or learning in naturalistic exposure (Mahadeo, 2003).

In addition, studies show that older learners exposed to both informal and formal situations perform the best. Savignon (1972) argued that L2 programmes which focus only on accuracy and form do not give students sufficient opportunity to develop communicative abilities in an L2 and she suggested that a combination of formal and informal instruction aids the development of linguistic and communicative language skills in foreign language learners. Spada (1986) concluded that the learners who had access to both formal instruction and to naturalistic input outside the classroom showed the greatest gains in proficiency. Furthermore, instruction effects only seem to last if there is continuing access to the linguistic structure after class, in after-class naturalistic input (Lightbown, 1991). All of these studies show that learners seem not only to need instruction, but continuing exposure outside the classroom.

Mahadeo (2003) investigated the role that input plays in L2 achievement by school-age and post-secondary learners in an acquisition-poor environment, Mauritius.¹¹ The results of the study indicate that lower achievement among learners from the rural area studied was due to their limited opportunity to access input not only inside but more importantly outside the classroom. Achievement scores of learners were measured against both classroom and extra-classroom input at three levels of education. In lower secondary schools, the less proficient learners, whose exposure to English outside the classroom, for example, was 'none' or 'barely enough', achieved overall mean scores out of 100% of 33.6% and 40.6%, in both written and oral tests, respectively. On the other hand, higher proficiency learners whose exposure to English was described as 'moderately enough' and 'much', achieved overall mean scores ranging from 58.3% to 74.7%, in both written and oral tests, respectively. The same pattern of achievement is observed at secondary level and post secondary level. The achievement scores in these schools range from 43.5% for those with a 'barely enough' input to 78.4% for learners with much exposure outside the classroom if the

¹¹ Despite English being the official language, Mauritius is French dominant, and most inhabitants also speak a French-based creole as their native language.

combined results in written and oral tests are once again calculated. The scores for post secondary learners from high achieving secondary schools range from 81.3% to 89.9% for the same tests. The results of the study thus indicate that low levels of achievement can be measured against exposure. Learners are more likely to develop a higher level of proficiency if they come into contact with significant resources of the L2, through better classroom interaction or after-class resources, e.g. social interaction, L2 reading for pleasure, multi-media exposure or private tuition (2003:260). The study supports the assumption that higher ability learners seem to have benefited from exposure to more input in their social milieu. Where under-achievement exists, the reason is lack of exposure to English outside the classroom (2003:264-265).

2.2.2.3 Source of Input

Apart from quantity, the source of input also matters. The exposure amount to the TL is probably the most important factor in L2 acquisition, but since most EFL learners only have access to input in instructed settings, an alternative is to consider the quality of input. This section considers naturalistic input quality from two viewpoints: comprehensible and incomprehensible input, and primary linguistic data, and then considers explicit and negative evidence (instruction).

Comprehensible input and incomprehensible input

What input do learners need to improve their proficiency? Krashen (1981; 1982; 1985) thinks comprehensible input is the basis of acquisition and learners should be exposed to input which is slightly beyond their level. This Input Hypothesis has, however, been criticised for the unclear definition of 'comprehensible' and 'slightly beyond'.

Krashen argues that we acquire (rather than learn) language in only one way: when we understand messages, when we obtain comprehensible input (CI), which is well-known as The Input / Comprehension Hypothesis (Krashen, 1981; 1985; 2002; Krashen & Terrell, 1983). Many researchers in the field of L2 acquisition, e.g. Asher (1986) and Winitz (1981) have proposed similar ideas; moreover, in the field of literacy, Smith (1973) and Goodman (1967) proposed that we learn to read by reading, by understanding the message on the page, before Krashen proposed his hypothesis for spoken language acquisition (Krashen, 1985:vii; 2002:4). According to the Input Hypothesis, which is the central part of Krashen's five hypotheses,¹² the input, to be

¹² Krashen's Five Hypotheses: a. The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis: adults have two distinctive ways of developing competences in second languages...*acquisition*, that is by using language for real communication...*learning*... 'knowing about' language (Krashen & Terrell, 1983:26); b. the Monitor

useful to the learner, must be neither too difficult to understand nor too easy. This is conceptualized by Krashen in terms of the learner's current level, called *i*, and the level that the learner will get to next, called *i + 1*. For the learner to progress rather than remain static, the input has always to be slightly beyond the level at which s/he is completely comfortable with; the gap between the learner's *i* and the *i + 1* that s/he needs is bridged by information drawn from the situation and from the learner's previous experience. 'We also use context, our knowledge of the world, our extra-linguistic competence to help us understand' (Krashen, 1982:21). Learners progress from stage *i* to *i + 1* along a pre-set series of stages (Andersen, 1978; Bailey, Madden & Krashen, 1974; Brown, 1973; deVilliers & deVilliers, 1973; Dulay & Burt, 1973; 1974; 1975; Makino, 1980; Pienemann, 1989; Vainikka & Young-Scholten, 1994; 1996a; 1996b; 2005). Some of the model requires a precise developmental scale on which *i* and *i + 1* can be located. This scale invokes the natural order hypothesis: 'we acquire the rule of language in a predictable order, some rules tending to come early and some late' (Krashen, 1985:1).

In terms of comprehensibility, we need to think about providing the right level of input in order to facilitate learner's language development. In reading, for example, it is generally recommended 95% of text should be comprehensible. With respect to vocabulary, Nation (2001) reviews various studies which indicate that about 98% of the words in running text should be previously known in order for independent reading to be possible.

However, the ability of so-called comprehensible input to result in acquisition relies on the actual language forms being incomprehensible, as pointed out by White (1987a). She refers to this as 'incomprehensible input' because it is what learners do not yet understand that will eventually result in interlanguage restructuring (Carroll, 2001; Cook, 1993; White, 1987a). White (1987a) starts her argument by assuming contextual factors might force change. If a learner wants to interpret, in terms of a grammar without a passive rule, a sentence like *The book (was) read (by) John*, it will be nonsense: **The book read John*. If we assume that learners are driven by some general desire to make sense of as much of what they hear as possible, then, on being confronted with this kind of nonsense, a re-analysis of the grammar will be forced. Furthermore, some specific forms, e.g. short passives like *John was hit*, provide more

Hypothesis: conscious learning...can only be used as a *Monitor*, or an editor (Krashen & Terrell, 1983:30); c. the Input Hypothesis: humans acquire language in only one way – by understanding messages or by receiving 'comprehensible input' (Krashen, 1985:2); d. the Natural Order Hypothesis: we acquire the rules of language in a predictable order (Krashen, 1985:1); and e. the Affective Filter Hypothesis: a mental block, caused by affective factors...that prevents input from reaching the language acquisition device (Krashen, 1985:100).

suitable input for grammar change than long passives like *John was hit by Fred* because in acquiring the verb *hit*, the learner will have acquired the information that it obligatorily subcategorises for the thematic role of theme and thus the learner's internal grammar will be re-structured. White also suggests that there may be more than one potential route for grammar change, since more than one factor can initiate grammar reorganization. Carroll (2001:10) argues that stimuli available to the perceptual systems must first be converted into usable mental representations that in turn serve as input to speech parsers, which are 'tuned to the frequency of particular structures in the language the learner hears'. Input to parsers is distinguished from input to learning mechanisms in that new learning occurs precisely when parsing fails (Lardiere, 2004:462). It is true that in order to understand a language at all, one must know a certain amount of its grammatical properties. Carroll states:

Comprehending speech is something which happens as a consequence of a successful parse of the speech signal. Before one can successfully parse the L2, one must learn its grammatical properties. (Carroll, 2001:9)

Although incomprehensible input can initiate grammar change, too much of it can impede language acquisition. The appropriate portion the learner needs between comprehensible and incomprehensible input is not yet clear.

In instructed settings, learners also typically receive negative data and explicit data. Although it is argued that only primary linguistic data can change the learner's linguistic competence (see above), the other two types of input are argued to result in learned linguistic knowledge, which can at least change the learners' linguistic performance. This does not diminish the importance of learned linguistic knowledge. There are some rules that are unacquirable and learned linguistic knowledge should aid learners in this area (Schwartz, 1993). For instance, in keeping with the work of on the Subset Principle in L1A (e.g. Berwick, 1985), one can theorise a context in L2 acquisition in which the L1 grammar instantiates the superset value of a parameter and the TL grammar represents the value associated with the subset; if such situations do exist (MacLaughlin, 1992), then it is logical to deduce that only negative data would be sufficient to set the L2 grammar to the subset value (White, 1987a). In other words, all of the primary linguistic data with which the L2 learners will come into contact will be compatible with the value of the parameter set for the L1 grammar (i.e., the superset value); only the data telling the L2 learners what is not possible could force a change in the interlanguage grammar. However, this argument does not entail that an L2 learner is necessarily able to use negative data to effect reorganization in the

developing interlanguage system (Schwartz, 1988). In principle, there are three types of input available to a language acquirer in a classroom setting:

- a. positive linguistic data (PLD), consisting of utterances in the ambient language;
- b. negative data (ND), consisting of explicit and perhaps implicit information about the impossibility of a form, utterance, or sentence; and
- c. other explicit data, consisting of descriptive information about the language.

ND contain information *about* the sentence, that is, its ungrammaticality, which is not a feature of PLD. ND and other explicit data can only change learners' learned linguistic knowledge (LLK), which then results in the learners' learned linguistic behaviour (LLB). Schwartz points out that, under modularity, information encapsulation blocks this kind of knowledge from entering the language module because such knowledge is not the 'appropriate type' of input, which means PLD, since PLD are what build L1 grammars. What this means is that ND and explicit data have been effective in building LLK, but not competence, which is UG based. This may well point to the incompatibility of LLK and linguistic competence. Such a speculation may explain why, in the case of some L2 learners, the syntax (being built on the basis of PLD) continues to grow but the morphology seems to lag behind; LLK, in this case inflectional verbal morphology, cannot just feed into the grammar.

Input from written texts

In many foreign language teaching contexts, primary linguistic data are usually difficult to access. For young learners who clearly have the ability to acquire language, this presents a problem. In many cases (such as schools in Taiwan), schools cannot afford native foreign teachers. Most of the English teachers in EFL situations are non-native subject teachers and form tutors (or homeroom teachers) whose English ability varies and is often far from nativelike. Thus learners cannot be guaranteed to receive primary linguistic input in classroom conversation. One alternative is to obtain input in written form, for example from reading. Thus Carroll (2001:2) states:

... for there is no agreement on what kind or how much exposure a learner needs. Indeed, we know very little still about the kinds of linguistic exposure learners actually get. (Carroll, 2001:2)

Some researchers suggest that because language is form, not substance, the same

language can be realised in sound, or visual symbols, or indeed any other suitable medium. According to Lyons (1968:60-61), ‘... we can interpret this to mean that neither the sounds nor the letters are primary, but they are both alternative realizations of the same formal units.’ For the L2 learners, at a particular moment in time, language can be medium-independent: s/he can receive and process a message in either medium without having to translate from one to the other. Linguistically, speech is primary; psycholinguistically, language may be medium-independent. If the aim is to impart a reading knowledge of the FL, there is no theoretical objection to introducing the written language early on. For young beginners, we may well concentrate on speech for the sake of the livelier classroom interaction it engenders, but there is nothing in the theory to prevent us to introduce written language as a back-up.

Researchers such as Krashen (1981) and Vahle (2007) propose that passive exposure to linguistic input that is comprehensible is the main variable necessary for language learning. This can include reading and has developed into Krashen’s interest in promoting ‘free voluntary reading’ (FVR), also called ‘extensive reading’. Thus, as Elley recommends for the Fijian situation, written material can be introduced at an early stage, reducing the demands on the teacher to provide all the linguistic information, and providing students with a far richer source of language data (Elley, 1984).

Although there is still controversy among English language specialists about the best age for introducing English language instruction in countries where English is not usually spoken in the home (Hyltenstam & Abrahamson, 2001; Nunan, 2003), policy changes mandating the earlier introduction of English in foreign language settings are increasingly being implemented worldwide. Countries are trying to provide an input-rich and input-appropriate environment for their L2 learners, despite the fact it is difficult in practice, especially in the EFL context. Various MFL programmes are designed to suit national curricula of the countries which are eager to provide their young learners the best possible environment. To understand how governments worldwide approach this, the next section summarises the context from five countries¹³ about programmes and practices designed to support foreign language instruction for primary-age learners. In section 2.4 we return to the idea of extensive reading to provide additional input.

¹³ These five countries are selected because they are spread over Europe and Asian, where the researcher is currently studying and where the current study is taking place.

2.3 Models of Provision

The influencing factors of the MFL programme in each country vary due to the language or languages used in learners' homes, the overall education systems, the cultural influences on language practices, the approaches to educational administration, and each nation's history of language teaching and learning. Some countries simply have more teaching time available for language study than other countries. In spite of the differences, common threads are found. In many countries, a foreign language has been part of the national curriculum in these countries for some time, but has typically been introduced at secondary level. Recently, educators have been encouraged (and sometimes mandated) to rapidly implement foreign language education for younger learners – at six or seven years of age. Often, the speed of this implementation exceeds the pace at which programmes are able to prepare materials and train teachers, creating questions concerning the goals of primary foreign language education. These questions include appropriate and effective models of instruction, programme design and planning, instruction methods and teacher training, including techniques for rapidly improving teachers' language ability to speak and teach and strategies for sustaining teachers and their MFL programmes (McCloskey *et al.*, 2006:1).

Many countries have had educational reforms of primary foreign language education since the 1980s, e.g. England and Italy (Italian Ministry of Education, 1985a; Johnstone, 2003). Generally, children begin learning a foreign language when they are seven to ten years old, though in some countries there are official national or local experiments with an earlier start (Johnstone, 1994; 2003; Zhu, 2003). This section gives model curricula from five countries to show how governments treat modern foreign languages for young learners. Table 2.2 is a preview of the starting age and hours of instruction. The description includes both the design and evaluation of these programmes to show the amount of input learners in EFL counties can generally obtain and investigate the problems occur in EFL contexts. Since we have discussed the influence of target language exposure, it is important to know whether FL learners receive a similar amount of exposure. If they do not, we need to know why. The countries are ordered based on their geographical distance from the country of the current study, i.e. from Europe to Asia.

Table 2.2 Summary of current models of provision

Country	Age to start MFL	Hours received / week
England	age 7	1 hour
Italy	age 8	2 hours
Turkey	age 8	1.3 hours
Japan	age 9	2.25 hours
Mainland China	age 9	2 hours
Taiwan	Age 9	1 hour

(DfES, 2005; Kocaoluk & Kocaoluk, 2001; Koike, 2001; Lopriore, 2006; Ministry of Education of R.O.C., 2003; Zhu, 2003)

England

In England, a modern foreign language was introduced at Key Stage 3 (KS3; see table in footnote 14 for ages) until recently.¹⁴ After 2002, a greater emphasis was placed on starting in primary (KS1, 2). The Language Strategy for England (DfES, 2002) offers the most authoritative statement of the role of early language learning in England and asserts the importance of beginning young: ‘Children’s aptitude needs to be tapped into at the earliest opportunity when they are most receptive’. The *KS 2 Framework for languages* (DfES, 2005) is being introduced gradually between 2005/06 and 2009/10. The government’s plans for primary languages are for full implementation in 2010. Learners generally receive 1 hour a week for KS2 and 2 hours for KS3. The Framework is a flexible document which assumes that primary class teachers will be centrally involved in decisions relating to how to teach a language or languages to their learners. It does not prescribe language or content, so schools are free to decide for themselves the languages, themes and content they wish to teach. Such decisions will often be taken in consultation with the local authority and local secondary schools. Some schools teach one language over four years; others may choose a more multi-lingual approach focusing on how language works and on the development of language learning strategies. Introducing small amounts of language learning and building up little by little is recommended. The expectation is that most children will be equipped with basic communicative skills in a language (or in some cases languages), as defined by the Common European Framework (CEF) (Council of

¹⁴ The National Curriculum in England is organised on the basis of four key stages, as amended by the Education Act 1993, namely:

Stages	Learners’ Ages	Year Groups
Key Stage 1 (KS1)	5-7	1-2
Key Stage 2 (KS2)	7-11	3-6
Key Stage 3 (KS3)	11-14	7-9
Key Stage 4 (KS4)	14-16	10-11

Europe, 2001) or The Languages Ladder (DfES, 2005).¹⁵ Nowadays, the European Language Portfolio¹⁶ (Council of Europe, 1997) is often adopted as an assessment tool among schools. In broader terms, this means that after four years of language learning, most KS3 (age 11) learners will be able to understand simple spoken and written language, to speak and take part in short conversations, and to write simple sentences. They will also understand about different cultures and have an idea about how languages work and how to learn them. In short, they will be becoming confident users and learners of a new language.

Will this work? The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) commissioned two major research studies relevant to early language policy to investigate the extent of the Language Strategy for England (Johnstone, 2003). First, Martin (2000) analysed the national and international research on early language learning in schools, e.g. the 1960s/70s experiment which introduced French into many English primary schools and was negatively evaluated by NFER (Burstall *et al.*, 1974), to discuss what had gone wrong. Points made included achieving continuity and progression between primary and secondary and ensuring an adequate supply of appropriate teachers. Martin also provided evidence to make it clear that an early start by itself guarantees nothing, and this led to a helpful discussion of the minimum conditions which need to be fulfilled if an early start is to realise the benefits which are claimed for it. Subsequently, a number of reviews of research on the effects of age on language learning have been published, e.g. Marinova-Todd *et al.* (2000), Scovel (2000), which caution against over-inflated claims about the benefits of an early start. Second, Powell *et al.* (2000) were commissioned to provide a research-based analysis of provision on the ground at KS2. They estimated that some 21% of schools were offering some form of early language learning at KS2, but mainly through extra lessons and clubs in out-of-taught time, with learners often paying a fee. Early language learning at KS2 appeared to decline between 1995 and 2000, especially in state-maintained schools, partly because of schools' obligations to fulfill the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, [Retrieved on 2008-05-16]) and partly because of the opposition of a significant number of primary head-teachers to the introduction of another subject into the curriculum. They found considerable variation in MFL provision across the country, and when specialist language teachers moved on or left, they tended not to be replaced.

¹⁵ The Languages Ladder is a voluntary assessment scheme to give learners of all ages recognition for their language skills.

¹⁶ The *European Language Portfolio* (Council of Europe, 1997) is an assessment tool developed for learners of a foreign language in Europe and is meant to record the learner's competencies, learning progress and cultural experience in one or more foreign languages.

With regard to MFL, continuity and progression seemed a major problem in that most primary and secondary schools reported no direct link between the two, and also recorded a concern about the preponderance of a limited range of teaching strategies which, in turn, led to restricted activities on the part of learners, such as rote-learning. They concluded it would be important to create a new defined space for this new subject: to allow teachers more time to pursue appropriate developmental work; to facilitate integrative teaching; and to ensure less reliance on 'out-of-taught time' activities. It would also be important to provide a reliable supply of suitably trained teachers. They also pointed to the need for additional funding, e.g. to encourage new entrants into the profession; to provide scope for more differentiated treatment of learners entering KS3; to develop and disseminate ideas for greater use of information and communication technology in the delivery of primary MFL.

Italy

The most recent national education reforms have expanded opportunities to learn a foreign language throughout primary school. In Italy, children have to learn a language from 8 until 18 (Garner, 2003). The *Teaching Programmes for Primary School* (Italian Ministry of Education, 1985a:15, cited in Lopriore 2006:63)¹⁷ guidelines made it very clear that the main aim for introducing foreign languages at the primary level was to 'provide children with yet another tool to organise their thoughts and knowledge'.

Foreign languages at primary level were first officially introduced in Italy in 1991 as a direct implementation of the 1985 primary school reform (Italian Ministry of Education, 1985b).¹⁸ Originally, the foreign language – English, French, German, or Spanish – could be chosen by children's parents, provided not only that the chosen language was one in which teachers were specialists but also that the language was offered in the children's school. In most cases, the available teachers are specialists in English, which has inevitably led to a shift in the general policies that now promote English as the main, if not the only, foreign language taught in Italian schools (Lopriore, 2006:64).

From 1991 to 2003, Italian children began studying a FL at the age of 8 (in the third year of primary school) for an average of three hours per week, except in some primary schools where foreign languages were experimentally introduced earlier (in

¹⁷ The original documents are in Italian; therefore, I have to cite Lopriore (2006).

¹⁸ See Lopriore 2006.

the 1st or 2nd year) or those kindergarten classes where different types of FL experimental teaching were carried out (Benvenuto & Lopriore, 1999; Taeschner, 1993). However, the recently published ministerial guidelines for implementation of school reform (Italy Implementation Decree n. 59, Decree Law n. 53/2003, cited in Lopriore, 2006) have reduced English teaching from three to two hours per week, which have been strongly criticised by professional associations of teachers, but the Ministry of Education justified this choice by the anticipated introduction of English starting in the first year (Lopriore, 2006:65).

Primary English teachers usually use a learner-centered approach, with a theme- or topic-based modular syllabus and the inclusion of communicative games. Aural-oral skills are emphasized, as are interdisciplinary links because foreign language teachers also teach other subjects besides English, and the English lesson is inevitably influenced by what children learn in other content areas. This weighting, given its connection with other subjects, is the most interesting feature of the foreign language syllabus. Because FL and Italian have common cognitive objectives, there are several opportunities for FL in the primary school curriculum to have a cross-curricular learning function (Titone, 1990). The quality of foreign language learning lies in its communicative nature, which allows learners to enhance the knowledge they acquire from other subjects and thus to deepen their understanding of communication and of language as a system (Lopriore, 2006:66).

The ministerial guidelines (Italian Ministry of Education, 1985a) specifically recommend focusing children's attention on certain contrasts between their native language and the foreign language. Teachers point out simple contrastive features – such as differences in sentence building, tenses, and time expressions – and linguistic choices in the performance of language functions in celebrations. Some specific metalinguistic and grammar awareness activities in the native language have become more common (Titone, 1993). The use of textbooks is compulsory, and texts are usually written specifically for the Italian market and comply with the ministry guidelines and the Council of Europe descriptors (Council of Europe, 2001). Italian versions of the *European Language Portfolio* booklets have been adopted at primary level and teachers are developing more self-assessment activities to help their students learn how to monitor their own progress in the foreign language.

Despite issues of choice of teacher, type of training needed and offered, and number of hours per week for the FL, the results of MFL seem positive. In 2000, the Ministry of Education and the Department of Education of the University of Rome carried out a

national evaluation project regarding foreign language competences of children leaving primary school with 3 years of FL learning. The results of the tests administered for English and French to almost 3,000 fifth-year primary students throughout Italy were positive (Lopriore, 2006).

Turkey

In the Turkish education system, primary education currently lasts eight years, from Grade 1 (age 6-7) through Grade 8 (age 12-13), and learners in state-owned primary schools begin learning English in Grade 4. The English curriculum and the syllabi for primary schools are centrally administered by the Turkish Ministry of National Education (MNE). The entire curriculum for primary education for Grades 4-8 sets the English language foundation for secondary education. The main goals of English language teaching in primary level (Grade 4-5) are to raise students' awareness of a foreign language, increase students' interest in and motivation toward the English language, encourage students' use of the target language in daily communication, help students develop appropriate strategies, and create a positive attitude toward learning English (Kocaoluk & Kocaoluk, 2001, cited in Kirkgöz 2006:87).

The approach advocated by the MNE is predominantly communicative, with elements of the cognitive approach. Priority is given to students' acquisition of skills for daily communication at a basic level for Grades 4-5. The MNE emphasizes that in these grades English should be taught within the context of games so that students enjoy learning the language. The syllabus of Grades 6-8 is more complex. The function of English instruction for these grades is to expand basic communicative skills that students have gained through the integration of the four communication skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). It is also aimed at broadening the basic communicative skills that students previously acquired at the sentence level to the paragraph level and expanding literacy with short texts. The MNE objectives are made concrete in the syllabus. Within the broad category of goals, a list of behavioral objectives is specified. The MNE syllabus is explicit and instructional; it contains comprehensive guidelines for teachers concerning management of the learning process, information on how to use teaching aids, and a set of activities for the development of communicative skills. The syllabus is topic based; students learn language functions in different situations (Haznedar, in progress; Kirkgöz, 2006).

In state primary schools, two lessons per week are allocated to teaching English in primary Grades 4-5 (each lesson is 40 minutes), and five lessons to Grades 6-8. Before

the start of the school year, the list of MNE-approved books is officially issued, and teachers are required to choose locally prepared course books, which are carefully designed within the specified MNE objectives with simple language, structural framework and layout and with increasing levels of difficulties for older learners. Each school creates its own syllabus and teachers are responsible for preparing their own lesson plans. Assessment is an important part of the curriculum, although portfolio assessment¹⁹ is not yet in use. Students in Grades 4-5 are required to take two written tests each term, and upper grades are required to take more than 2 hours of assessment per term, as recommended by the MNE. The number of oral tests to be given is determined by the teachers. The passing grade is 2 points out of 5 (Kirkgöz, 2006:87).

Kirkgöz (2006) reported some unfavorable aspects of the curriculum based on a questionnaire survey to 50 teachers: class size, quantity of input, teaching time and lack of resources. An average of 40-50 students per class made it difficult for the teachers to complete the curriculum, which was already too dense, particularly for Grade 6-8. It has been suggested that the quantity of the input to which young learners are exposed needs to be reduced (to allow more time for practice).²⁰ Also, the teaching hours allocated for each grade make it difficult to pay individual attention to students and conduct additional consolidation activities. Finally, many schools lacked equipment and materials (e.g., computers, tape recorders, VCRs, extra course books) for reinforcement activities. On the whole, the syllabus of young learners of English was found to be appropriate, particularly for Grades 4-5, and the curriculum makes teaching and learning more effective and results in better performance in communicative skills, provided that the number of hours devoted to each grade were increased. Target syllabus requirements seemed essentially realistic. However, there exists a gap between the MNE objectives and actual classroom instructional practices. The study found that the communicative orientation of ELT also needs to be strengthened as advocated by the MNE (Kirkgöz, 2006:96). Nonetheless, Haznedar (in progress) argued that the specified objectives and goals in the curriculum were not based on empirical research findings reported in the L2 acquisition literature. The

¹⁹ A portfolio is a collection of examples of work that, as a collection, reveal both the capability and the progress of a learner. A language learning portfolio would include samples of writing and lists of books read (O'Malley & Valdez Pierce, 1996). Portfolios can link assessment with teaching and with metacognitive development through including learners in the evaluation of performance, thereby developing skills in learners' self-assessment. Learners are involved in deciding what to include in their portfolios and in assessing or evaluating the pieces of work according to clear and explicit criteria (Cameron, 2001:237).

²⁰ Although the classroom input may not be primary linguistic data, it is worth considering whether this reduction may still decrease the total amount of input which the learners need to trigger language development.

method suggested by the curriculum was rather teacher-centered, and specified level distinction. Furthermore, after examining the current 4th Grade primary curriculum, assessment and evaluation were absent.

Japan

Primary school English language instruction in Japan since 2002 has been adopted on a voluntary basis as part of an obligatorily integrated course throughout the school system. It is included in a new, compulsory subject called ‘period for integrated study’, which is different from other courses, to the effect that each school is obliged to include in the course one or some of the following listed subjects: international understanding (including foreign languages), information processing, environment, social welfare or health. English as a school subject is not a regular subject, but is restricted to a part of the period for integrated study, having no direct connection to later obligatory English. Integrated study involves three 45-minute communication-oriented classes of English per week, if the school is willing, from the 3rd grade to the 6th. It is advised that teachers should cover both English and cultural information in each class, therefore time allotment is left to their discretion. ‘International understanding’ includes the terms ‘foreign language conversation’, ‘international exchange activities’, and ‘international learning activities’. All three activities are mutually connected. ‘Foreign language conversation’ quite often refers to English conversation in the ordinary cases where students meet. In primary schools, the students share certain activities with other students and teachers through learning simple expressions; these are called ‘English activities’. Regarding the aims for ‘English activities,’ the primary purpose is to foster the students’ interest and desire to communicate and learn about other people and cultures. In this special context, appropriate English includes spoken English expressions; words students want to say or do; expressions good for students’ daily lives; basic and useful expressions; and vocabulary good for familiar topics or for those suitable for the students’ level of development. Regarding teaching methods, in general, all methods are acceptable and therefore the approach is eclectic, so long as they are appropriate to students needs. Class length is also flexible. The normal class period is 45 minutes, but there is no need to rigidly stick to this. In addition, visiting native-speaker families off campus is also encouraged (Koike, 2001).

However, there are some concerns (Koike, 2001). One worry is that later English classes will have students of mixed English abilities, with the result that students will lose motivation. Educators themselves are seemingly divided on the benefits of

primary English education. Some think the focus should be on Japanese and others believe in the benefits of international education. There are some possible reasons, according to Koike (2001), why the Central Educational Commission did not adopt English as a regular subject. One is simply that the educational burden of children is already quite heavy, and additional work could be seen as oppressive. Another is that the decrease in the school week to five days²¹ has put a great deal of pressure on educators merely to teach the contents of the traditional curriculum. Some also claim that Japanese must take priority over other languages, and instruction in English at this level would interfere with the process of Japanese-language acquisition (de Lotbinière, April 7, 2006; Koike, 2001). The last possibility is that the government is concerned about the lack of qualified English teachers and would like to wait until a more appropriate solution is found (de Lotbinière, April 7, 2006; Shi, 2005:17). Qualified English instructors only represented around 5% of the total number of teachers who taught the language at the 21,116 schools that said they gave English in the school year 2006 (*The Japan Times*, 03/03/2007).

A recent survey shows that 97.1% of public primary schools nationwide have taught English in fiscal 2007 through March 31, up 1.3 percentage points from the previous year. 80.5% of the overall number of public primary schools starts teaching English from the first grade, and the rate is gradually rising to 95% for sixth graders. A new teaching guideline will change English to a compulsory subject for fifth and sixth graders in fiscal 2011; students will receive 35 lessons of 45 minutes each during the school year, which works out at less than one lesson per week. As a result, the Ministry of Education considers improving the teaching capabilities of teachers and the quality of classes their first priority (Breitbart, 21/03/2007; Corpora, 08/05/2008; Sonagi, 06/04/2008; *The Japan Times*, 03/03/2007).

Mainland China

As of 2008, China had not yet officially implemented a primary foreign language programme; however, many provinces have run their own programmes for decades, e.g. Lu (2003) reported that 27 provinces among the 33 have various English projects. Some started from the fifth grade and others from the third. For instance, three sessions (two for lessons and one for review or quiz) are adopted in NanJin City, with tests and exams weekly or every other week (Shi, Zhou, Zhu & Chen, 1998). After the 1990s, primary English education became more popular, the age of starting lowered and many experimental projects on English are being carried out. Since the lack

²¹ In some Asian countries, e.g. Japan, Taiwan, children used to go to school on Saturday mornings too.

naturalistic environment is considered the biggest problem, many schools believe in immersion education to provide large amounts of input. Many experimental projects based on (partial) immersion education at schools are being implemented and some non-immersion schools have been trying to increase the English hours in their curriculum. The partial-immersion project in Shanghai is currently said to be the most successful because it is the closest to the full 'immersion' model; only the Chinese language is not taught in English, and the project has expanded to high school level. (Z. Feng, 2002; Zhu, 2003).

Problems mentioned earlier in other countries, such as qualified teachers and transition from primary to high school curricula, materials and assessment also exist in China (WNXK (Wo-Neng Xue Ke), 23/03/2007a; 23/03/2007b; 23/03/2007c; Zhu, 2003).²² Teachers in China are mainly from three backgrounds: form tutors, high school teachers who also teach part-time at primary schools, and teachers who are employed from outside the school. There are shortcomings of these three types: form tutors generally do not have good English proficiency, although they are generally more dedicated teachers. High school part-time teachers have better language knowledge but are more difficult to control because they are not based in the schools. Teachers from outside the school system usually lack a background in education, psychology and pedagogy. Therefore, improving teacher quality has been the most important issue in recent years (WNXK (Wo-Neng Xue Ke), 23/03/2007c; Zhu, 2003). Regarding the connection between primary and secondary curriculum, no clear definition of levels was made until the government published 'Primary English Curriculum Basic Requirement'²³ (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 18/01/2001) in early 2001 and later 'National English Curriculum Standards'²⁴ (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2001). Large regional differences result in an unbalanced development between cities and rural areas, which, in turn, leads to big differences of students' levels, thus a clear level definition to help evaluate students' levels in order to work on the connection between primary and secondary curriculum is of great importance (WNXK (Wo-Neng Xue Ke), 23/03/2007c). This regional difference will later have an influence on the secondary teachers' teaching when they have a class of mixed-level students. A variety of newly developed materials are available now. Many international publishers, e.g., Longman, Thomson Learning, and Macmillan, have been working with educators and teachers to develop new textbooks specifically for the Chinese learners under the national

²² *Wo-Neng Xue Ke* is a website based on China, providing information relevant to education policy, resource, computer software, sample/example test, and so on.

²³ Temporary translation; 小学英语课程教学基本要求试行.

²⁴ Temporary translation; 国家英语课程标准

curriculum (J. Wu, 2005). If teachers instead choose materials based on their own experience, this will subsequently cause difficulty in curriculum design, education research, and evaluation of student level and the policy (WNXK (Wo-Neng Xue Ke), 23/03/2007c).

The current study looks at Taiwan where primary learners started learning English at grade three (age 9) in 2005. Generally, learners receive 1-2 sessions a week according to the national curriculum, although many local governments and schools may adjust the hours to meet their needs (Ministry of Education of R.O.C., 1999; 2003). There are experimental partial-immersion-like programmes in some privately run primary schools and also extra-curricular summer programmes (e.g. Lo, 2006), aiming to provide more input. Some schools have been trying to use both formative and summative assessment; while others still use more traditional tests. This could add problems when assessing national performance. There have been surveys to evaluate the policy and many issues and problems have been identified. Unsurprisingly, those problems which we have seen from the above five countries also exist in Taiwan's MFL programme. Similarly, researchers are concerned about the quality of English teachers, in addition to the problems of materials, regional differences, mixed-level classes and the shortage of teaching resources (He, 2003; Lin, 2003b; Ministry of Education of R.O.C., 15/10/2003; Xie, 2002).

This review of five different countries indicates that primary MFL worldwide provides similar programmes, e.g. similar starting age, hours, and communication-oriented goals. Internationally the same situation exists, e.g. these countries are short of qualified FL teachers and thus teacher training has been perceived as the first task for the ministry of education. Governments and schools have been trying to provide more instruction hours in their curricula, but in reality there is still a big gap between the curriculum and the practice. Some studies, e.g. Haznedar's (in progress), of Turkey also found flaws in the national curriculum, while others placed attention on the connection between primary and secondary curricula. In some countries, e.g. England and China, local authorities can decide how they want to carry out the MFL programme according to available resources. Although this gives more flexibility to the design of programmes, this could subsequently increase the difficulty of policy evaluation on the national level. Furthermore, this might aggravate regional differences, which may indirectly influence learners' learning. This review shows that none of the countries recognises the importance of input outside of school, although all of the countries try to provide as much input to the learners as possible through good English teachers, interesting materials, and meaningful conversations 'at school'.

However, as we can see that at most, learners only receive around two hours at school, which is barely enough, according to the literature review on the amount of input. Much more input is needed and the only possible way seems to be to promote extra-curricular input to increase the target language exposure.

As in the five other countries, extra-curricular input is rarely mentioned in the research studies in Taiwan. Although English input is easily accessible, e.g. English radio channels and TV programmes, English movies on cable TV, English books, magazines and newspapers, teachers rarely direct learners to these materials. This means that learning is mainly confined to language classrooms and that learners need a lot more exposure if they want to do better in English. Now I will move on consider in more depth extra-curricular input is before returning to the context of this study in chapter three.

2.4 Extra-Curricular Input and Extensive Reading (ER)

2.4.1 The importance of extra-curricular input

J. Carroll's (1965) early study suggested one of the best ways to learn a language and to improve language skills is to study and travel in a country where the target language is spoken. However, few students can afford to live and study in a place where English is spoken daily; for most, studying in an EFL context will be confined to the classroom. The role of learning outside the classroom can be considered because, after all, students stay in the classroom only for a few hours a day and learning English there is often controlled by the curriculum and the time available. Students can take responsibility for their learning by being actively involved in learning beyond the classroom. That is, learning English should be an ongoing process so that students have to self-direct their learning by using all the skills and resources at their disposal, once the teacher is not around to give them input. They have to create opportunities where English is used as often as possible. This relates to the idea of 'learner autonomy' (see Holec, 1981), which refers to situations in which learners work under their own direction outside the conventional language-teaching classroom (Benson, 2001:13). The basic idea of autonomy has supported learner-centered approaches to language teaching oriented towards communication in context rather than the acquisition of decontextualised knowledge about the target language (Breen & Candlin, 1980; Littlewood, 1981). The idea that language learning should be a process or learning how to communicate thus underpins the notion of learner-centredness, which holds that the learner rather than the teacher should stand at the centre of the

process of teaching and learning (Nunan, 1988; Tarone & Yule, 1989).

Using informal interviews with university learners, Sy (1995) found that those learners (aged 17-24) who ventured to use the target language beyond the classroom showed evidence of language improvement and became more able to actively use the target language. Mahadeo's results (2003) indicated that limited input outside the classroom could have a negative impact on the learner's achievement in L2, where additional input is only available to children whose parents have better socio-economic status and higher education background. In Taiwan, Lan and Oxford (2003) investigated 379 six-graders (age 12) through questionnaires and reported that many learners were forced to receive instruction from private English schools outside their regular primary schools. The researchers reported that parents should try to encourage rather than force children to learn English by providing a variety of channels besides attending private English schools. Possible suggestions include introducing children to easy-to-read stories with pictures, providing young-children's picture dictionaries, encouraging watching cartoons in English, providing them with age-appropriate and colourful learning software, and making use of good audio-learning materials (see section 2.5.3 for family support of extra-curricular input). As in section 2.2.2, the importance of extra-curricular input is mentioned through several studies (e.g., Lightbown, 1991). This is an area which has been relatively ignored in the large body of literature, possibly because of the difficulty in controlling variables in an extra-curricular context.

Zhan (2001b) is one study on children's after-school English learning. In his survey of 318 primary students (aged 9-12) and 12 primary English teachers in Taiwan, through observation, portfolio collection, questionnaire survey and interviews, he reported that only around 50% of the students listened to English broadcasts and 36% read in English for entertainment after class. More than half of the students never read, wrote emails or used CD-ROMs in English (2001b:191).

Chai (2001) also investigated the situation of upper grade (age 11-12) children's after-school English learning and their attitudes toward English learning in four counties of Central Taiwan. The sample consisted of 1,195 children in the upper grade, 616 boys and 576 girls, from 16 public elementary schools. The data were collected with a closed-form questionnaire. She reported that more than 90% of the upper graders received more instruction at a private children's English language school (cram schools).²⁵ Most children learned English through textbooks where content was

²⁵ Instruction at cram schools is not considered as extra-curricular input in this study because it is

phonetic symbols and pronunciation. Most children learned English extra-curricularly based on their parents' arrangements. About half of these higher graders (51.9%) reported that they spent half an hour on extra-curricular revision every day, whereas a rather high percentage (31.6%) of the other learners reported they never reviewed at all. The participants also reported that on the supplementary materials used, 72% listened to tapes and 35.7% reported they read storybooks. This study shows that learners accept and welcome extra-curricular input, although it is not clear whether these activities were school assignments.

Learning in an EFL context is mostly confined to the classroom, where input is usually more limited in amount and controlled in type, when compared to naturalistic contexts (see section 2.2). Learners need to be directed to available extra-curricular resources in order to receive the input that will promote acquisition. As previously noted, in terms of quantity of input, it is generally considered the more the better. Lack of input means reduction in the availability of comprehensible input. This is likely to slow down the development of implicit knowledge. Extra-curricular input, as mentioned earlier, is one solution to this problem.

After reviewing eight surveys in Fiji (six of primary learners, one high school and one university level), Elley (1984) attributes Fijian learners' weakness in English, which is the medium of instruction after the first three or four years of primary school, to their lack of opportunity to read at an early stage, and thus recommended early exposure to written materials. Krashen (1989; 1993; 2004a; 2004b) also has been encouraging free voluntary reading for language development for nearly two decades (section 2.2.2.3). To him, reading completes instruction and recreational reading is comprehensible input (Krashen, 2004b). Language learners acquire vocabulary and spelling most efficiently by receiving comprehensible reading (Krashen, 1989).

Reading storybooks seems to be a good way of receiving input because it is accessible and full of input (PLD and repeated, possibly formulaic, chunks).²⁶ It may be easier for learner readers, compared to learners as listeners, to learn constructions from books. According to Rigby's (1980) study of learners using five senses, there are significantly more visual learners (83%) than the other four.²⁷ During listening, there are various factors for the listening learner to miss language components, e.g. if the speaker speaks too fast or too soft, if the learner does not for example hear the past

different (see Ch 3, section 3.2.3) in nature from the extra-curricular input provided by the current study.

²⁶ See section 2.5.2 and Myles (1999; 2004) on how chunks can be stored as a base for development.

²⁷ The other four senses: taste (1%), hear (11%), feel (1.5%) and smell (3.5%).

tense suffix *-ed*, or if the learner gets anxious and freezes. Input from reading may be clearer, and the learner can adjust the reading speed by themselves. Inflections are less likely to be missed and the learner can go back to any word as need be. In the following section, I will introduce the rationale of providing extra-curricular input from reading to improve overall language proficiency.

2.4.2 The Importance of L2 reading

To begin with, declining interest in reading among children and young people is a worldwide concern (Fry, 1985; Yu, 1999) and it is even harder work for second language readers, especially for beginners. Finding ways to succeed in encouraging reading for input is a challenge as learners can become discouraged.

Many children escape reading, in either their L1 or L2, because they see books as another means of instruction, of fact-finding and of didacticism (Chambers, 1973:37), or because learning to read is hard work, much harder than we adults remember, or because books are boring (Kim & Krashen, 2000). However, being able to read in English is necessary for accessing information, operating machines and computers as well as for entertainment. Written English is everywhere in life (Krashen, 2003a). Many good things happen to students who read a great deal in the new language. Research studies show that they become better and more confident readers, they write better, their listening and speaking abilities improve, and their vocabulary gets richer. In addition, they develop positive attitudes towards and increase motivation to studying the new language (Bamford & Day, 2004:1). We can only learn to read by reading (Smith, 1973:195) and only reading promotes reading (*Reading to Learn Institute*) – the more students read, the more their vocabulary grows, the more words they can read, and the more reading they can do. There does not seem to be a shortcut to becoming a fluent reader, according to a large amount of studies (e.g. Bamford & Day, 2004; Day & Bamford, 1998; Eskey, 1986; McQuillan, 2007).

Some researchers have questioned the impact of avoiding written input for young learners. For instance, VanPatten (1988) raised the issue through Harley and Swain (1984). It is documented that learners entering an immersion programme in the later stages (i.e. at more advanced grades) do better at segmenting and processing the input they receive compared to those learners with comparable amounts of classroom exposure who are at lower grade levels. One important difference between the two levels is the quantity and quality of written input. Early stage learners in immersion programmes neither receive instruction in literacy nor much written input used for

communicative purposes. The more advanced learners do. He argued that written input might have made an impact on the learners' performance and the effect of instruction. Therefore, avoiding it may be detrimental.

Difficulties in L2 reading

Very frequently, students reading in a FL seem to read with less understanding than one might expect them to have, and they seem to read considerably slower than they reportedly read in their first language. For instance, MacNamara (1970) found that the Irish-English bilingual students he studied were reading in their weaker language at a slower rate and with lower comprehension than students reading in their first language. Alderson (1984) puts forward two hypotheses to explain the difficulties in L2 reading:

1. Poor reading in a FL is due to poor reading ability in the L1. Poor first-language readers will read poorly in the FL and good first-language readers will read well in the FL.
2. Poor reading in a FL is due to inadequate knowledge of the target language.

Alderson suggested that empirical results seem to support the second hypothesis more, namely that reading problems are due to language problems, at least for low level learners, and that there is a threshold or language competence ceiling has to be attained before existing reading abilities in the L1 can begin to transfer. Therefore, teachers need to be aware of whether learners' difficulty in reading results from inadequate FL knowledge or poor L1 reading skills.

Let us now look at what we know about the reading process.

2.4.2.1 L1 reading models: Bottom-up, Top-down, Interactive models and Schema Theory

From at least three decades of research we now know a lot about the reading process in L1. In the 1970s, a bottom-up approach was promoted, which was then replaced by a top-down model, which in turn was replaced by interactive models.

In bottom-up processing, the reader uses their linguistic data-processing mechanisms to decode the written form of language they read. This is also called data-driven (or text-driven processing) where the reader needs mature language knowledge to process information and then make meaning of it (Gough, 1972). The reader decodes written

text using linguistic rules to understand the meaning of a word, a sentence, a paragraph and then a whole text (Urquhart & Weir, 1998). This is a linear, sequential process based on letters, phonemes, words, and sentences (Goswami & Bryant, 1990; Pearson & Stephens, 1994; Purcell-Gates, 1997). The top-down (or reader-driven model) holds a different view of the reading process. This model says that readers interact with the text starting with their own world knowledge. Goodman (1970) viewed reading as a process of hypothesis verification, whereby readers use selected data from the text to confirm their guesses (Urquhart & Weir, 1998:42). Brown (2001) points out that readers have to take a risk to infer meaning, decide to keep certain information in mind and move on, and readers use their own experience and knowledge to make meaning of the text. Readers' background knowledge, cognitive development, reading strategy, and purpose of reading are all stressed in top-down processing.

Now many researchers acknowledge that both top-down and bottom-up processing takes place when readers read a text in an alphabetic script (Eskey, 1997; Frehan, 1999; Grabe, 1991; Jannuzi, 1997; Nuttall, 1996; Purcell-Gates, 1997). These two processes interact with each other during reading. That is, readers' background knowledge interacts with bottom up processing of the text and together they attach the meaning to it. 'Interactive reading' thus combines the two early models. Nuttall (1996:17) considers that during reading, readers use top-down processing to predict the meaning of the text and then use bottom-up processing to confirm their prediction. In short, in interactive reading, the meaning of a text is constructed by the interaction of the readers and the text (J. Wang, 2006).

Schema theory

While constructing the meaning of a text beyond the level of the word, the reader must supply additional material derived from their existing knowledge of the world. Background knowledge is inevitably present in the reading process (Urquhart & Weir, 1998:63). Readers bring their own meaning to the written language according to their experiences, knowledge of the text and the world, emotion and their culture background and this background knowledge is the 'schema' (Minsky, 1975).²⁸

²⁸ X. Xie (2005) summarises the origin of the term. Schema, originally a term in cognitive psychology, was generally thought to be put forward by Bartlett (1932) based on Gestalt psychology. Modern schema theory emerged in the middle of the 1970s with Minsky (1975), Rumelhart (1980) and Schank and Abelson (1977) as its representatives. After its appearance, modern schema theory was soon applied to the research of speech and reading, pointing to a new direction in the research of complicated speech (Freedle, 1979). Rumelhart, Smolensky, McClelland and Hinton (1986) claim that the idea of schema is one of the most important concepts in cognitive science.

Schema theory refers to the process of connecting new information with readers' previous knowledge and constructing meaning for the text (Urquhart & Weir, 1998:149).

Two kinds of schema are identified: content schema and formal schema. Content schema refers to readers' general knowledge of the subject matter, which is what we know about people, the world, culture, and the universe (Brown, 2001), while formal schema includes readers' knowledge of the text structure or rhetorical form (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983; Grabe, 1991; Jannuzi, 1997; Myers, 1997; Singhal, 1998). To be skillful in reading relies on whether readers' linguistic knowledge and the knowledge of the world can interact efficiently (Clark & Silberstein, 1977:136-137).

In brief, schema theory relates to top-down processing in its emphasis of readers' contributions during the reading process. When readers have difficulty in comprehending a certain piece of writing, it is probably because the text does not include enough cues for readers to apply appropriate schema; readers do not have the specific schema to understand the theme of the text or their interpretation of the text does not follow the author's logic of organizing the text (Baker & Brown, 1984; see also J. Wang, 2006).

2.4.2.2 Basis of L2 reading: L2 vocabulary

Reading in the early stages of L2 acquisition will combine meaningful reading in sentences supplemented by independent reading at the letter and word level. When readers read, they have to recognise words as they associate pronunciation and meaning with printed words. They need to develop automatic recognition of words/chunks that occur in text, to enable them to read independently and fluently. Problems in recognizing words inevitably lead to difficulty in reading. L1 readers, if they are reading age-appropriate material, can be assumed to have lexical entries previously established for the words encountered. This situation, however, cannot be assumed in the case of L2 learners. Here readers may frequently face items which they not only have difficulty decoding particularly if this is in a script with non-transparent orthographic such as English, but with which they are simply unfamiliar; a word might not yet have a place in their lexicon. L2 readers therefore have to acquire vocabulary items before they can begin to recognise of these items automatically (Urquhart & Weir, 1998:195).

Nation (2001) explains the lexicon component in human language, based on Levelt's

(1989) model. There are two important points: Firstly, that the knowledge it contains is declarative. That is, it is consciously known but can be built up through both incidental learning and formal study. Secondly, it is the choice of particular words that determines the grammar and phonology of sentences. Therefore grammar and other aspects are important components in what it means to know a word. This knowledge must closely relate to each particular word. This underlines the importance of encountering words in use as a way of developing vocabulary knowledge. It also shows how the decontextualised learning of vocabulary is not sufficient, although it may be useful, 'for knowing a word'.

Levelt (1989:9, 188) divides the lexicon into two parts, one that contains lemmas²⁹ and one that contains forms. Lemmas each consist of semantic and grammatical knowledge – knowledge of the meaning components of a word, and knowledge of the syntactic category (part of speech) of a word, its grammatical functions and some other grammatical restrictions and marking that determine its use, including person, number and tense. It is possible that, in addition to meaning components, each lemma contains information about appropriateness, style and other constraints that make it fit particular contexts. Information about a lemma is linked to the morpho-phonological form of the word. This simply means that meaning and form are linked in the lexical store (Nation, 2001:37-38).

The desire to expand L2 learners' vocabulary is supported by the L1 literature on the effects of vocabulary knowledge on comprehension. The correlations between knowledge of word meanings and the ability to comprehend passages containing these words is high and has been well established in the L2 literature (Laufer, 1989). Laufer (1997) discusses three lexical problems that may seriously impede reading comprehension in L2: (1) the problem of insufficient vocabulary, (2) misinterpretations of deceptively transparent words, and (3) inability to guess unknown words correctly. Drawing on a variety of studies, including her own, Laufer claims that by far the greatest lexical factor in good reading is the number of words in the learner's lexicon. A vocabulary of 3,000 word families or 5,000 lexical items is needed for general reading comprehension, as this would cover 90-95 % of any non-specialist text. Below this threshold, reading strategies become ineffective (Coady & Huckin, 1997:2). Therefore, while discussing reading problems, we need to define whether it is a language problem or a reading problem (e.g. strategy or comprehension) in order to seek a solution. For young beginner readers, their vocabulary is usually

²⁹ A lemma consists of a head word and some of its inflected and reduced (*n't*) forms. Usually, all the items included under a lemma are the same part of speech (Francis & Kucera, 1982)

under the threshold level; thus, scaffolding is usually required, usually from teachers, parents or peers.

A large vocabulary is also claimed to solve the other two problems: deceptive transparency and guessing ability. Deceptively transparent words are words that look familiar to the learner but are actually unfamiliar, for example words with deceptive morphological structure (nevertheless = 'never less'), idioms, false friends, words with multiple meanings, and 'synforms' (cute/acute). Laufer argues that misinterpretations of such words are widespread among L2 learners. Guessing word meanings by use of contextual clues is far more difficult, according to Laufer, than is generally realised. Guessing can be impaired by any of the following factors: (a) nonexistence of clues, (b) lack of familiarity with the words in which the clues are located, (c) presence of misleading or partial clues, and (d) incompatibility between the reader's schemata and the text content. To consistently make good guesses, one should know about 98% of the words in a text. For this kind of coverage, one would generally need a 'sight vocabulary' (words that are recognised automatically) of about 5,000 word families (8,000 lexical items). Laufer concludes that a large vocabulary is indispensable to good L2 reading and vocabulary guessing. Building a large vocabulary, however, requires accurate word perception. Laufer notes in her discussion of synforms and words with deceptive morphological structure that many L2 learners have trouble at this microscopic level of cognition (Laufer, 1997).

However, it has also been argued that vocabulary is best acquired through reading through multiple exposures to words in texts. This is supported by Krashen's studies and an extensive reading approach, which will be discussed in section 2.5. As mentioned earlier, Krashen views reading as the best way to provide additional comprehensible input for acquisition, particularly to reach higher levels of linguistic competence.

Reading is good for you. The research supports a stronger conclusion, however. Reading is the only way, the only way we become good readers, develop a good writing style, an adequate vocabulary, advanced grammar, and only way we become good spellers (Krashen, 1993:23).

This claim is supported by studies which examine the incidental vocabulary acquisition hypothesis, where readers acquire vocabulary during reading without consciously learning the words. A commonly mentioned strategy in L2 vocabulary acquisition is 'guessing from context'. Inferring meaning is a skill we all have in our

L1. We learn most of our L1 vocabulary by hearing it/reading it and using it; meeting spoken words frequently and in situations that we understand, we gradually assimilate their meanings. Later, when we meet words in books that we had not previously met in the spoken language, we sometimes use a dictionary. But as experienced L1 readers, from reading we have learnt a great many words that we never looked up in a dictionary and never had explained to us. We did this by getting a rough idea of a word's meaning from the context in which it occurred, and with every subsequent occurrence, the meaning became more precise (Nuttall, 1996:72). Inferring word meanings from context clues has been suggested to be the most important strategy for enhancing vocabulary growth (de Bot, Paribakht & Wesche, 1997); however, recent research argues while it may be an effective comprehension strategy (see Hulstijn, 2001 for an opposing view), and possibly a good way to consolidate known vocabulary (Nassaji, 2003), it is a poor strategy for learning new vocabulary (McLaughlin, 1989; Nassaji, 2003; Nation, 2001) because it can be time-consuming and misleading if unclear or few clues of any kind are given. 'It is a lengthy and error prone undertaking which, by itself, is an inefficient way of mastering L2 vocabulary' (Harley, Howard & Roberge, 1996:281) (see also Rosszell, 2006).

The incidental vocabulary hypothesis is often correlated with word frequency, yet findings are inconclusive. Saragi, Nation and Meister (1978:76) found a small but significant correlation (0.34) between the number of times each word occurred in a book and the number of people who chose the correct meaning on a test. From that, they concluded 'repetition affects learning but the relationship is considerably complicated by other factors'. Saragi *et al.* (1978) related incidental word learning growth to word frequency in the text, but none of the replication studies investigated this factor (Pigada & Schmitt, 2006). Waring and Takaki (2003) found that even if a word was encountered more than 18 times in a text, there was still only a 10-15% chance of remembering its meaning. Zahar, Cobb and Spada (2001) also studied word frequency as a factor conducive to incidental vocabulary acquisition. They suggest that the number of encounters needed to learn a word might depend on the proficiency level of the learner, because more advanced learners who know more words seem to be able to acquire new words in fewer encounters (Pigada & Schmitt, 2006). In Pigada and Schmitt, word frequency appears to enhance three types of word knowledge: spelling, meaning and grammatical knowledge, but to different extents. Spelling knowledge can be gained with a few exposures, while meaning does not seem to be as affected by frequency as might be expected, with 2-19 text occurrences yielding uptake rates ranging between 16-36% when nouns and verbs are taken together. Frequency seems to affect grammatical knowledge the least. They suggested that only

when words were seen twenty or more times was there a good chance of all three word knowledge facets being enhanced. Nation (1997) also argued, similarly, that unless one reads a very large amount so that new words are repeated sufficiently in context to be learned, reading is unlikely to lead to large increase in vocabulary knowledge.

Researchers and practitioners often recommend the use of frequency lists, suggesting that the most frequent 1,000 to 2,000 words are essential because they cover a very large proportion of the words in spoken and written texts and occur in all kinds of real language use and thus should make up a 'beginner's vocabulary' (Nation, 2001:16; Schmitt, 2000:143). However, the problems include the following: (1) the most important words for second language learners do not always appear in the first or second thousand words (e.g., *stupid* and *behavior* do not appear in the first 3,000 words of Thorndike and Lorge's classic (1944) list); (2) the order of words in a frequency list does not always indicate the best order in which to teach words (e.g., *his* is the 74th word in one list and *hers* the 4,151st word; included in the first 1,000 words of Thorndike and Lorge's list are *issue* [v], *stock*, and *Chicago*); and (3) word-frequency lists disagree considerably according to the types of texts being analysed (Nation, 1990). As a result of such problems, word-frequency lists appear to contradict one of the underlying assumptions of communicative approaches: Since vocabulary development occurs naturally in L1 through contextualized, naturally sequenced language, it will develop with natural, communicative exposure to the L2 (Zimmerman, 1997:14). The approach that developed from this emphasizing using language for meaningful communication is *Communicative Language Teaching* (CLT), in which it is assumed that L2 vocabulary, like L1 vocabulary, will take place naturally (Coady, 1993). However, it has now been realised that mere exposure to language and practice with functional communication will not ensure the acquisition of an adequate vocabulary for reading, so current best practice includes both a principled selection of vocabulary, often according to various frequency lists (e.g. Leech, Rayson & Wilson, 2001; Thorndike & Lorge, 1944), and an instruction methodology that encourages meaningful engagement with words over a number of recyclings (Schmitt, 2000:14). In an FL context, natural development of vocabulary may be difficult because learners are usually exposed to the TL in classrooms only and the vocabulary to be learnt is controlled by the curriculum and teachers. Some countries have adopted word-frequency lists in their curriculum translating them into a national curriculum as in Taiwan where it contains a word list of 2,000 for primary and junior high school learners (Ministry of Education of R.O.C., 1999).

Words and phrases are essential to language learning. The only real issue is the best manner in which to acquire them. Acquiring vocabulary is often seen as acquiring just the word meaning, but there are other aspects of knowledge related to it, e.g. subcategorization.³⁰ It is a gradual process of one meeting with a word adding to or strengthening the small amounts of knowledge gained from previous meetings (Nation, 2001:155). Any meaningful contact with a target word will contribute to its eventual acquisition (Nagy, Anderson & Herman, 1987). It seems clear that significant numbers of meaningful encounters with the target language will eventually result in proficiency. If someone needs to achieve only small to moderate proficiency in the language without any time pressure, then a Natural Approach (Krashen, 1982; 1985), whereby acquisition occurs through contextual use alone, would seem to be quite a reasonable suggestion (Coady, 1997:288), just like in the case of young learners in an immersion context.

Recent research also suggests that although L2 learners do acquire vocabulary through reading, the amount is relatively small (Carver & Leibert, 1995; Duffelmeyer, 1985; Gardner, 2004; Nation, 1997; Waring & Takaki, 2003); even Krashen refers to this as 'adequate' (see p. 48). Other studies also suggest that relatively little vocabulary is acquired from extensive reading or incidental reading (section 2.4.2.2). Waring and Takaki (2003) examined the rate at which vocabulary was learned from reading graded readers. The results showed that words can be learned incidentally but that most of the words were not learned. Their data suggested that, on average, the meaning of only one of the 25 items will be remembered after three months and the meaning of none of the items that were met fewer than eight times will be remembered three months later. Thus, many researchers have started to test the effect of vocabulary instruction, in addition to reading, and claim that the combination of the two works best in vocabulary acquisition (Paribakht & Wesche, 1997; Rosszell, 2006; Zimmerman, 1994). There is significant emphasis in this combination on the explicit teaching of words at an early stage of acquisition in order to help beginner readers reach the threshold level for independent reading, which is supported by empirical studies (Coady, 1993; Nation, 1990; 1993; Nation & Newton, 1997). These researchers deal with more elementary learners of English and, more often, in a non-English speaking environment, i.e. EFL context. For example, Nation argues that the 2,000 most frequent words should be learned as quickly as possible by the most efficient means possible, including direct teaching and learning and the use of graded readers. Coady emphasizes that these words should be learned to the point of

³⁰ Verbs are subcategorised according to what other elements must appear with them in the VP. In other words, they are subcategorised in terms of their complementation types (in terms of what complements they must take (Burton-Roberts, 1997:80).

automaticity. While comparing instruction and extensive reading by children, Elley (1991) presents the results of nine different studies that exposed young children to a wide range of high-interest illustrated storybooks in second language literacy oriented programmes. Five parameters were common to all of the studies: immersion in meaningful texts, incidental language learning, integration of oral and written language, focus on meaning rather than form, and the fostering of high intrinsic motivation. There were rapid gains in reading and listening comprehension, which tended to remain stable over time. Moreover, Elley (1989) found that the oral reading of stories to L2 primary learners led to significant and long-term vocabulary acquisition. Elley concludes that these studies provide support for whole-language approaches and for Krashen's Input Hypothesis.

This section has looked at the components of language and specifically how the lexicon is related to successful reading. A vocabulary of 3,000 word families is considered to be needed for basic, general reading comprehension and acquisition of these words efficiently is what the research aims to determine. Empirical studies show that extensive reading (reading for meaning alone) results in significant acquisition of L2 vocabulary; however, it is also argued that direct instruction, on top of reading, can help the beginner reader to reach the threshold for reading. Although frequency wordlist is often recommended and used in L2 vocabulary acquisition, the lack of clarity of the lists and the disagreement between the lists still need investigation.

2.4.2.3 Reading for meaning

Reading goes beyond understanding vocabulary and involves additional complex (not necessarily conscious) skills and strategies. When people read, they normally read for general comprehension, whether for information or for pleasure (Grabe & Stoller, 2002:11; Nuttall, 1996). They do not necessarily read for specific details but to get main and supporting ideas, and to relate these to background knowledge. This process is complex in fluent reading, because it requires rapid and automatic processing of words, fluent skills in getting the general meaning and main ideas, and coordination of these and other processes usually under time constraints. Many researchers have investigated the skills that underlie reading (Alderson, 1984; Barnes & Powell, 1996; Birch, 2002; Eskey, 1997; Frehan, 1999; Grabe, 1999; 2000; 2002; Mikulecky, 1990; Miller, 1996; Mitchell & Swarbrick, 1994; Ollerenshaw, 2003; Saragi *et al.*, 1978; Stanovich, 2000; Urquhart & Weir, 1998; Wagner & Stanovich, 1996). However, most works (e.g. Barnes & Powell, 1996; Mitchell & Swarbrick, 1994; Ollerenshaw, 2003) cover specific skills or processes, but do not integrate them. Grabe and Stoller

(2002:20) is helpful as it divides processes into two parts: lower-level and higher-level. The lower-level processes include lexical access, syntactic parsing, semantic proposition formation and working memory activation and they represent the more automatic linguistic processes and are typically viewed as more skills-oriented. When lexical access, syntactic parsing and semantic proposition formation occur for a fluent reader, they work together effortlessly. The words that are accessed, the information that is cued grammatically and the emerging meaning are all active for a short period of time in working memory³¹ (Carpenter, Miyake & Just, 1994). If words are to be integrated so that an accurate sense of meaning is formed, information must be combined rapidly. Working memory keeps information active for one to two seconds while the appropriate processes occur. Speed of processing is essential; it is not simply a nice additional aspect of comprehension ability. If processing of active information is not quick enough, information fades from memory and must be reactivated by re-reading, thus taking more resources and making the process inefficient.

The higher level processes include four sub-processes: text-level of comprehension, situation-based reader interpretation, background knowledge use and inferencing and executive control processes. The text-level refers to the coordination of ideas from a text that represents the main points and supporting ideas to form a meaning representation of the text. Almost immediately, the reader will begin to interpret the information from the text in terms of his or her own background knowledge, inferences, goals, motivation, and attitudes (the situation level). This accounts for how a reader can understand both what an author is trying to say (at the text level) and how the reader interprets that information for his or her own purposes. This duality of understanding explains how a reader can provide a summary of a text but also offer a critique of the text's position. As the reader transforms information from clause-level meaning units to the text to the situation, both background knowledge and inferencing take on greater importance. How such a monitor (executive control processing) might operate cognitively is still not entirely clear although these ideas have been around for a while (Gathercole & Pickering, 2000; Siegel, 1994).³²

³¹ The term *working memory* is now generally preferred to short-term memory. It refers to the information that is activated, or given mental stimulation, for immediate storage and processing. It involves the active use of cognitive processes such as recognizing and storing word information, using syntactic information, connecting pronoun references, building overall text structure, integrating and restructuring information, assessing inferences and adapting reader goals (Grabe & Stoller, 2002:18).

³² A specific reading purpose will lead to greater or lesser emphases on different reading processes. For instance, reading for general comprehension will use a balanced combination of text model comprehension and situation model interpretation. Reading to learn will first emphasise the building of an accurate text model of comprehension, and then a strong interpretive situation model that integrates well with existing or revised background knowledge (Grabe & Stoller, 2002:19-31).

However, as mentioned earlier, researchers (e.g. Alderson, 2000; Grabe & Stoller, 2002) have argued that L2 learners must have a sufficient amount of L2 knowledge (i.e. vocabulary, grammar and discourse) to make effective use of skills and strategies in L2 reading or, high-level cognitive processes. That is, L2 proficiency plays a large role as a foundation for L2 reading.

Reading skills, reading comprehension and proficiency do not have straightforward relationships with each other as they appear to have. A skilled reader could probably obtain the general comprehension of a text at the same level as someone who has higher proficiency and poor skill. Someone who has very good decoding skill of words is not guaranteed good comprehension because s/he might not have the background information needed. Reading skills, reading comprehension and proficiency are different and thus need to be measured with different instruments.

However, low-level reading ability is shown to be predicted by the amount of exposure to print, which leads us back to the issue of amount of exposure and input in 2.2.2 and 2.4.1. Stanovich, over the past decade, with his colleagues has been exploring the impact that exposure to input (i.e. the amount of reading) has on reading abilities and on the types of knowledge that are useful for reading. Their studies have shown that there are strong relations between amount of exposure to print and cultural knowledge, general knowledge, vocabulary knowledge, reading skills, spelling, orthographic knowledge of words and verbal fluency (Cipielewski & Stanovich, 1992; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Krashen, 1985; 1989; 2004a; 2004b; 2004c; 1993; 2007b; Stanovich, 2000; Stanovich, West, Cunningham, Cipielewski & Siddiqui, 1996; Wagner & Stanovich, 1996). What makes Stanovich's approach interesting is his ability to show that the amount one reads has a strong relationship with reading ability even after some other likely influences on reading abilities have been eliminated, using regression methodology. His research does not predict that amount of reading must be the cause of later reading abilities, because the cause and the effect could go in the reverse direction. He quantified the strength of the relationship between reading exposure and reading abilities with a fairly simple process and made strong arguments for the importance of reading a lot. Despite the fact that the development to fluency and automaticity in word and syntactic processing is an essential foundation for reading, most L2 readers are simply not exposed to enough L2 print through reading to build fluency processing (Koda, 1996; Lundberg, 1999), nor do they have enough exposure to build a large recognition vocabulary (Grabe & Stoller, 2002:47).

Furthermore, a major distinction between L1 and L2 reading contexts is the differing

cultural and social preferences given to particular ways of organising discourse and texts, according to Connor (1996) and Grabe and Kaplan (1996). In literate societies around the world, people develop preferred ways of organising information in written texts and the L2 text resources may not always be organised in way that match readers' L1 reading experiences. For example, L2 readers need to learn to recognise and use text structure signalling devices and discourse organisation that differs from their L1 (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). Text structure signalling involves the uses of text signals that connect sentences and part of sentences together. These signals include pronouns, definite articles, repetitions of words and synonyms, words that highlight informational organisation (e.g. first, second however, in contrast), and transition words, phrases and sentences. Discourse organisation more broadly refers to larger units of text, how they are organised and how they can be recognised. Good readers are able to recognise problem-solution and cause-effect sequences in texts; they can recognise comparisons and contrasts as well as strong classification system that are being explained. More generally, good readers recognise the obvious signalling of narrative organisation as well as argumentative for-and-against organisation. Good readers also pick up cues for discourse organisation from the use of basic verbs and nouns. Signalling information and discourse organisation both regulate the amount of information presented in a text as well as the ways in which this new information is introduced. All of these textual features of discourse contribute to comprehension, particularly with more difficult texts.

In the present study, it is the relationship between extra-curricular exposure and proficiency that we want to investigate rather than the aspects of reading (skills and comprehension) discussed above. These aspects were excluded for several reasons. First, reading skills and comprehension involve many other variables and there may be individual variation in high-level skills both of which are outside the scope of this thesis. Second, the present study did not involve any skill training treatment. Third, the participants in the present study were young beginners and therefore had generally lower proficiency and a low level of real-world knowledge. As mentioned earlier, L2 learners use the reading skills they have already developed once their language is above the threshold level (Alderson, 1984; Coady & Huckin, 1997; Grabe, 1988). However, all children in the study had acquired basic reading skills in English by the age at which they were tested. In section 4.7, we will look in more detail at how children in Taiwan gain the skills in lower-level reading processes when they learn L2 English.

As argued earlier, extra-curricular input is of importance for learners in EFL context

where in-school input is limited. If young learners can be exposed to reading materials early on, reading as a source of extra-curricular input could enhance acquisition. But, this input needs to be able to attract learners' attention, be enjoyable and easily accessible (Justice & Kaderavek, 2002). 'Extensive' rather than 'intensive' reading offers such a possibility. Extensive reading can create a low anxiety reading environment and is more flexible in its form of implementation, which better suits the after-school context.

2.5 Extensive Reading (ER)

There are many different ways to approach a written text and readers usually use different methods for different purposes. For example, when they want to emphasize the accuracy of linguistic units or of a text, reading comprehension, developing reading skills, or translating a text, readers use the 'intensive reading' method (Schmidt, 1996). On other occasions, reading is only for pleasure. Such 'extensive reading' is where reading fluency and reading for gist are the aims. Different terms have been used in literature to refer to extensive reading, such as 'abundant reading' used in the landmark 1900 *Report of the Committee of Twelve* (Modern Language Association of America., 1984), 'supplementary reading' (West, 1955:26), 'sustained silent reading' (National Reading Panel, 2000), 'pleasure reading' (Krashen, 1993; Mikulecky, 1990) and 'Free Voluntary Reading (FVR)' (Krashen, 2004b). In this thesis, I will use the term 'extensive reading' as the term for asking readers to read widely and just for gist. In this section, the theoretical basis of extensive reading will be established. First, the rationale of adopting an extensive reading approach is presented, followed by the related techniques and factors. Lastly, I will explain how this can take place in the context of home/family reading, another recent trend.

2.5.1 Definition and rationale

Second language learners who neither read nor like reading present a problem. Students with negative attitudes toward L2 reading are unlikely to be motivated to do the reading they need to do in order to become fluent readers (Day & Bamford, 1998:2). The situation is worse for L2 readers because reading can be hard work, rather than pleasurable. Trelease (2001) introduced the concept of a 'home-run book', a reading experience that readers claim stimulated their initial interest in reading. It was later confirmed by Krashen and other researchers that most enthusiastic readers had had this experience, e.g. Von Sprecken, Kim and Krashen (2000), Kim and Krashen (2000), and Ujiie and Krashen (2002). Similarly, Day and Bamford (1998:30)

found that L2 learners' initial successful experiences in extensive reading resulted from the discovery that they could read in the L2 and that it was rewarding and pleasurable. This stimulated the development of positive attitudes toward reading in the L2 and the growth of motivation to read in the L2. These positive beginning experiences then fed back into subsequent extensive reading experiences, resulting in greater gains in reading ability and positive attitudes, and increased motivation and enjoyment. Day and Bamford (1998:30) term it the *Extensive Reading Bookstrapping Hypothesis*, which is similar to the 'home-run book experience'. The idea is that bookstrapping will lead to at least some students becoming hooked on books. Johnston and Allington (1991) wrote that reading instruction that captures the student's interest and involvement may result in *flow experiences* – the losing of oneself in the activity (cf. Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), and that flow experiences were a powerful incentive to continue one's involvement with reading, and to make reading a part of one's life.

Ujiie and Krashen (2002) pointed out it is disturbing, however, that so many once-enthusiastic readers become less enthusiastic. This suggests that something happens to dampen enthusiasm for reading after the initial positive experience. This is what Kim has called a 'strike-out' experience (Kim, 2001) and it is vital to regain their passion about reading (Ujiie & Krashen, 2002). This is exactly the reason why extensive reading should be promoted: because it aims to get learners reading in the new language and liking it. It can be integrated into any second language curriculum or class. It can be used with learners at any level and at any age because it is learner-focused, offering learners a private reading experience with pleasure, without pressure and competition. The only necessity is that learners already have a basic knowledge of, and are literate in, the FL or L2 (Bamford & Day, 2004:1).

Extensive reading is an approach to language teaching in which learners read a lot of material at their level in the new language. They choose their own reading material and read it independently to the teacher. They read for general, overall meaning, and they read for information and enjoyment. They are encouraged to stop reading if the material is not interesting or if it is too difficult. They are also encouraged to expand their reading comfort zone – the range of material that can be read easily and with confidence (Bamford & Day, 2004:1). The following is a list of characteristics found in successful extensive reading programmes (Day & Bamford, 1998:7-8):

1. *Students read as much as possible*, perhaps in and definitely 'out' of the classroom.

2. *A variety of materials on a wide range of topics is available* so as to encourage reading for different reasons and in different ways.
3. *Students select what they want to read* and have the freedom to stop reading materials that fails to interest them.
4. *The purposes of reading are usually related to pleasure, information, and general understanding.* These purposes are determined by the nature of the material and the interests of the learner.
5. *Reading is its own reward.* There are few or no follow-up exercises after reading.
6. *Reading materials are well within the linguistic competence of the students* in terms of vocabulary and grammar. Dictionaries are rarely used while reading because the constant stopping to look up words makes fluent reading difficult.
7. *Reading is individual and silent,* at the student's own pace, and, outside classroom, done when and where the student chooses.
8. *Reading speed is usually faster rather than slower* as students read books and other material they find easily understandable.
9. *Teachers/parents orient students to the goals of the programme, explain the methodology, keep track* of what each student reads, and *guide* students in getting the most out of the programme.
10. *The teacher / parent is a role model of a reader for students* – an active member of the classroom reading community, demonstrating what it means to be a reader and the rewards of being a reader.

Researchers of the extensive reading approach believe that extensive reading brings important benefits to students (see Table 2.3 below). Now let us look at them in more detail.

Some L1 acquisition research shows us that the mind only has a certain amount of processing capacity available at one time. Thus, when fluent readers have to slow down and pay conscious attention to recognizing words (i.e., employing the strategy of phonemic decoding), which are not *sight words*,³³ they find it difficult to understand the meaning of the sentence or the paragraph in which the unknown or unfamiliar words occur. Studies also show that, from a cognitive point of view, there is no essential difference between fluent L1 and L2 reading (Day & Bamford, 1998:16).

³³ Sight words: words that readers are able to recognise automatically (Day & Bamford, 1998:13).

Table 2.3 Benefits of Extensive Reading Programmes

Immediate benefits	Motivation	Many students do not like learning English but everyone likes stories.
	Practice	No one can learn a language (or a musical instrument) without practising out of class.
	Listening	Cassettes used along with books can give students the correct pronunciation of words, and draw them towards more fluent reading.
	Fluency	Some overseas students in the UK take five hours to read a 100-page graded reader! Enough said.
Long-term benefits	Writing	Students who read a lot write better. The books give them interesting topics to write about.
	General Proficiency	The cumulative effect of the above benefits will improve proficiency.

(Source: The Edinburgh Project on Extensive Reading (EPER), website)³⁴

What is true for fluent readers – that slowing down and paying conscious attention to recognizing words interferes with the construction of meaning – is even more true for beginner readers. The disruption is such for beginners that the link between the decoding process and the comprehension processes may be severed. As Samuels (1994:821) describes it, ‘if the reader’s attention is on decoding and if attention can be directed at only one process at a time, the comprehension task is not getting done’. Samuels believes that beginner readers are forced to switch their attention back and forth from decoding to constructing meaning, which, in his words, is ‘slow, laborious, and frustrating’ (1994:822). In sum, the most widely accepted models of fluent reading emphasize the importance of accurate, automatic word recognition. Extensive reading can – perhaps must – play an important role in developing the components upon which fluent second language reading depends: a large automatically recognised vocabulary; a wide general vocabulary; and knowledge of the target language, the world, and text types.

³⁴ Edinburgh Project on Extensive Reading (EPER) is a non-profit-making unit within the Institute for Applied Language Studies of the University of Edinburgh. Its purpose is to promote extensive reading as a major element in the teaching of foreign languages, with a special focus on the teaching of English as a foreign or second language. EPER has a database of extensive reading bibliography, develops and publishes support materials for teachers of extensive reading, and trains teachers in writing fiction for language learners. Further information can be obtained from their website: <http://www/ials.ed.ac.uk/postgraduate/research/EPER.html>.

2.5.1.1 The development of sight vocabulary

The development of a large automatically recognised or sight vocabulary can be seen as overlearning words to the point that they are rapidly recognised in their printed form. The best and easiest way to accomplish this is to read a great deal (Waring & Takaki, 2003). Beginner readers simply have to repeatedly encounter words with which they have some familiarity. As a result of multiple encounters, the word enters the reader's sight vocabulary. Familiarity breeds automaticity. Thus, the materials for this 'automaticity training' (Samuels, 1994; Scurfield, 2004) must be at '*i minus 1*' where '*i*' is the student's current level of acquisition because the goal of automaticity training is developing a large sight vocabulary rather than the learning of new linguistic elements. Of course, *i plus 1* text is an ideal target when learning to read, but inevitably, material includes *i minus 1* vocabulary and syntactic structures as well as *i* (the reader's current level of linguistic competence) and some *i + 1* (elements that the reader has not yet mastered). But as long as the bulk of the vocabulary and grammar is well within the reader's competence – *i minus 1* – without too many *i + 1* distractions, the automatic development of word recognition is possible (Day & Bamford, 1998:16-17).

2.5.1.2 The development of general vocabulary knowledge

The larger children's vocabularies are, the better their comprehension. Nagy and Herman stated it unequivocally: 'Children who know more words understand text better' (1987:27). Given the position that, from a cognitive point of view, there is no essential difference between fluent L1 and L2 reading, the need for a large vocabulary is equally true in fluent L2 reading. Grabe (1988:63) pointed out that 'fluent readers needed a *massive* receptive vocabulary that is rapidly, accurately, and automatically accessed'. The lack of such a vocabulary, said Grabe, 'may be the greatest single impediment to fluent reading by ESL students'.

Children learn large numbers of new words in their first language by guessing their meaning in context or through oral support from caretakers including when they are read to or read themselves. L2 readers who read masses of varied and interesting *i minus 1* material can increase their general vocabulary knowledge in a similar way. Coady, in a review of the relevant L2 research, concludes, 'The incidental acquisition hypothesis suggested that there was gradual but steady incremental growth of vocabulary knowledge through meaningful interaction with text' (Coady, 1993:18),

despite the vocabulary growth of incidental vocabulary hypothesis is still controversial (see section 2.4.2.2). Huckin and Haynes (1993:290) point out that beginning L2 reading is problematic for readers because they lack a large oral vocabulary; however, the process of incidental vocabulary learning can become more efficient as L2 reading ability increases (Stoller & Grabe, 1993:31-32).

To allow this initially difficult and problematic process of guessing, learning, and refining the knowledge of words from context, L2 readers must read materials with a very low ratio of unknown to known words. In other words, texts should be essentially *i minus 1*, containing only a very small number of unknown words and difficult syntactic structures, as discussed previously. This fits Laufer's (1997) claim that readers need to know 90-95% words of any text for general comprehension. And the reading of these easy texts must be plentiful because 'a clear sense of a word's defining features can only be reached through repeated encounters in diverse contexts' (Huckin & Haynes, 1993:290, in Day and Bamford 1998:17-18). Laufer (1997) specifically points out that a minimum of 95% text coverage which is achieved by 3,000 word families will lead to the transfer of reading strategies (including successful guessing) and that Hirsh and Nation's (1992) argument of a coverage of 98% for pleasure reading, with the remaining 2% being easily guess-able is ideal. To achieve a coverage of 98%, the learner needs to know about 5,000 word families, or 8,000 lexical items (Nation, 1990). In summary, whether one reads for pleasure (with 98% of coverage), or for bare necessity (within 95% of coverage), familiarity with a large number of words is a prerequisite for successful guessing.

2.5.1.3 Development and affect for different knowledge types

Harris and Sipay (1990:533) state that, 'wide reading not only increases word-meaning knowledge but can also produce gains in topical and world knowledge that can further facilitate reading comprehension' in L1 reading development. There is a parallel situation in L2 reading: L2 readers not only need linguistic, but also world and topic knowledge. Through an extensive reading approach, in which students read fluently and focus on the meaning of what they read, L2 readers have the best possible chance of developing these forms of knowledge (Day & Bamford, 1998:18-19).

Extensive reading programmes also result in affective influence, i.e. on attitude and motivation (Day & Bamford, 1998:21-31). Successful ER programmes place great emphasis on ongoing reading experience because it is more private, less competitive, and nonjudgmental. There is less fear of evaluation and it is flexible in terms of

individual variation. Learners have a choice of what to read, and they are not forced to read about topics in which they have no interest. In addition, they have the freedom to stop reading when they want to, with no questions asked. These elements of students choosing what, when, how, and where to read are hallmarks of autonomy in learning which will trigger the learner’s intrinsic motivation (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Vallerand, 1997). Similarly, Oxford and Nyikos (1989) argue that level of enjoyment is a factor in motivation. By motivating students with the kind of language activity they need and enjoy, students can have a pleasant experience; this helps acquisition, and students reap the rewards of increased language proficiency, which in turn motivates them further.

2.5.1.4 Successful Extensive Reading programmes

For the last three decades, ER has been investigated, and Table 2.4 is a short review of some of these, in both second and foreign language settings. With one exception, all are on English. It is apparent from the (Day and Bamford 1998:33-5) table that extensive reading programmes have had beneficial results. Students increased their reading ability in the target language, developed positive attitudes toward reading, had increased motivation to read, and made gains in various aspects of proficiency in the target language, including vocabulary and writing. These programmes were in a variety of settings with diverse populations, from young children to adults.

Table 2.4 Summary of results of studies of successful extensive reading programmes

Report	Population	Results
Elley & Mangubhai (1981)	EFL; primary; Fiji	Gains in reading and general proficiency, including listening and writing; growth in positive affect
Hafiz & Tudor (1990)	EFL; primary; Pakistan	Gains in vocabulary base and writing
Elley (1991)	EFL; primary; Singapore	Gains in reading proficiency and positive affect
Hafiz & Tudor (1989); Tudor & Hafiz (1989)	ESL; adolescents; England	Gains in reading proficiency, positive affect, and general linguistic competence, including writing; slight, nonsignificant increase in vocabulary base
Lai (1993a; 1993b)	EFL; secondary; Hong Kong	Gains in reading proficiency and vocabulary
Janopoulos (1986)	ESL; university; USA	Gains in writing proficiency
Robb & Susser (1989)	EFL; university; Japan	Gains in reading proficiency and positive affect
Rodrigo (1995)	Spanish; university; USA	Gains in positive affect; no statistically significant gains in vocabulary
Mason & Krashen (1997)	EFL; university; Japan	Gains in reading proficiency, positive affect, and writing
Cho & Krashen (1994)	ESL; adults; USA	Gains in reading proficiency, vocabulary, positive affect, and oral skills

(Day & Bamford, 1998:34)

Among studies conducted in the 1990s and since then are Krashen's. He provides evidence that self-selected recreational reading is the source of higher reading skill, writing style, vocabulary knowledge and spelling ability, and the ability to handle complex grammatical constructions (1989; 1993; 2004a; 2004b; 2007b). This has led to his advising the U.S. government to improve the quality of libraries. Krashen (2004a) suggested we should first improve the quality of the library so that the children could be exposed to the good books they need. Therefore, schools should purchase books in order to help their learners learn English well; alternatively, form tutors could start small classroom libraries on their own. The minimum number of books to begin an extensive reading library is argued to be one book of suitable level per student, with perhaps ten extra books in addition to this. In order to allow plenty of choice, however, it is ideal to have two to four books for each student in a class. To start with, doubling the number of books per number of students is realistic (Day & Bamford, 1998:108-109; Nuttall, 1996:132).

Looking at more recent studies of ER, results continue to point to benefits. For example, Pigada and Schmitt (2006) studied a 27-year-old learner of L2 French to explore whether a one-month extensive reading programme enhanced lexical knowledge on 133 target words, including spelling, meaning and grammatical characteristics. The measurement procedure was a one-on-one interview that resulted in a very detailed indication of whether learning had occurred. The study also explored how vocabulary acquisition varies according to how often words are encountered in the texts (see 2.4.2.2 on word frequency and acquisition). The results showed that knowledge of 65% of the target words was enhanced in some way, for a pickup rate of about 1 out of every 1.5 words tested. Spelling was strongly enhanced, even from a small number of exposures. Meaning and grammatical knowledge were also enhanced, but not to the same extent. Overall, the study indicates that more vocabulary acquisition is possible from extensive reading, but it is not consistent across all word knowledge types. This confirms the incidental acquisition hypothesis, as discussed previously in section 2.4.2.2.

Takase (2004a), after studying over 200 Japanese EFL high-school females, also concluded that although it can be assumed that devoted L1 readers are likely to develop better L2 reading habits, once their L2 reading competence improves enough to give them the same pleasure as they have already experienced in their L1, it might not work conversely, because devoted L2 readers were not necessarily motivated intrinsically. Rather, their motivational factor to read English books was a

‘sense of achievement’ or ‘self-confidence’ in reading English, which many of the participants had lost during their English studies in the past. Thus, without a ‘flow’ situation in L2, L2 reading habits were not likely to be transferred to L1 reading. In other words, ‘flow’ experience, sense of achievement and self-confidence are important factors to breed devoted readers. From the response of Takase’s participants to the extensive reading programme, it was revealed that the ER programme did work for most of the participants.

As mentioned in section 2.4.2.2, researchers have argued that vocabulary acquisition through reading can be time-consuming and teachers therefore turn to the help of instruction, e.g. Paribakht and Wesche (1997). Paribakht and Wesche (1997) examined the effect of reading activities and explicit vocabulary teaching on the incidental learning of vocabulary and they raise questions about the suitability of the approach for L2 learners. In an experimental study, they hypothesized that ER plus vocabulary instruction would be better than ER alone. The subjects were thirty-eight young adults from a variety of L1 backgrounds in an intermediate-level ESL course. Half of the subjects did vocabulary exercises emphasizing salience, recognition, manipulation, interpretation, and production, in addition to extensive reading. The other subjects did no vocabulary exercises but instead did extra reading. The study used both self-reports and performance evaluations to determine vocabulary knowledge. The findings support the idea that the combination of extensive reading and explicit instruction works better than ER alone. The researchers argued that the amount and kinds of cognitive processing required will be related to the depth of comprehension of unfamiliar words attempted by the reader, and will help determine the internalization of new knowledge about them, with deeper processing leading to higher rates of acquisition. Vocabulary exercises provide more information (e.g. subcategorization) than the reader’s current knowledge and is similar to Krashen’s input hypothesis ($i + 1$) (Krashen, 1982), whereas subjects who did extra reading might adopt the most common strategy while facing unknown words: ignore them (Bensoussan & Laufer, 1984; Paribakht & Wesche, 1993); thus input is similar to $i - 1$.

If we want to involve vocabulary instruction, one solution is to use a class reader,³⁵ which contrasts with the principle of ER, i.e. self-chosen materials. Day and Bamford (1998:47) pointed out that a programme of class readers has more in common with traditional forms of teaching reading and literature than with self-selected, individualized extensive reading. An alternative would be to use a

³⁵ A programme for using a class reader: Each student reads the same book at the same time in class.

group reader, which still might lead to difficulties because individuals are likely to have different levels of English and reading interests. Saragi, Nation and Meister (1978:72) reported that, even when a common book was used, only 12% of the words tested in their study were known by every learner, and every word tested was known by at least 30% of the learners. This means that even with a common coursebook there is considerable variety in the nature (and size) of the vocabulary learned by different individuals.

Another important area of exploration regarding ER are the benefits in reading ability and book levels. Although Krashen's Comprehension Hypothesis suggests readers should receive $i + 1$ input, the level slightly beyond the learners' current level, as we have discussed most studies suggest $i - 1$ materials are more appropriate. One study to look at this was Carver and Leibert (1995)'s. They investigated the effect of reading books upon gains in reading ability when the books selected were controlled for level of difficulty. Forty-three L1 students in Grades three, four and five read books each day during a two-hour class of a six-week summer programme. Half of the students read books designated to be slightly above their reading level ($i + 1$), while the other half read books below their level ($i - 1$), to see if the level of difficulty in text had an impact on gains in reading ability. The researchers hypothesized that only the $i + 1$ reading would result in gains. However, there was no convincing evidence gains by either group. Later, an empirical estimate of the readability of the more difficult books indicated that in fact there was no difference between the measured difficulties of the books read by the two groups, so that the study involved only the effect of reading relatively easy books. The findings were interpreted as providing no support for the idea that the best way to learn to read better is to read. In other words, the level of text difficulty can be an important factor in gain of reading ability; however, there needs to be more investigation to whether $i + 1$ or $i - 1$ works better.

However, the claim of ' $i + 1$ ' and ' $i - 1$ ' input, which seems contradictory, may not be. Day and Bamford's (1998) claim of $i - 1$ refers to vocabulary development only, and to automaticity of recognition at the start:

It is a good idea for all students to begin by reading very easy books. This will quickly build confidence and make it easier for them to begin to build both sight and general vocabularies (Day & Bamford, 1998:91).

This is similar to Krashen's claim of light reading, of books with less sophisticated

language, e.g. comics and teens romance. Day and Bamford argue that as students then develop their linguistic and reading competence, they then 'ladder up' (Day & Bamford, 1998:91). This means that the level of materials the student read is in concert with their developing linguistic and reading competence. Material that was once beyond a student's capacity gradually becomes $i = 1$ as their comfort zone – the range of materials that can be read easily and with confidence – expands. Gradually, 'laddering up' occurs without the teacher's prompting because students are allowed to select their own material according to their interests (Day & Bamford, 1998:92). Krashen's $i + 1$ claim applies more to the learners' linguistic or more specifically, their morpho-syntactic development. In order to improve linguistic competence (which is always laddering up), learners need to read books at $i + 1$ level regarding grammatical difficulty. Books at i or $i - 1$ levels will only result in maintenance of the learner's morpho-syntactic level. In other words, grammatical difficulty may be the key factor that improves rather than vocabulary. However, no clear definition of i , $i + 1$, or $i - 1$ is given, and this results in the difficulty of selecting texts for most learners and teachers who choose the reading materials based on instinct. It can therefore take some time until books of interest at the right level are found by these on an ER programme and thus Krashen (2004b) claims that reading programmes work best over the long term and lengthy studies (longer than one school year) show this.

For Krashen, an ideal reading environment should have a great deal of interesting comprehensible reading materials; a time (and comfortable place) to read; minimum accountability (e.g. no required summaries or book reports); and a programme that lasts for more than a few months or a year (2004a; 2004b). Krashen argues that although the reading conditions and environment for many English learners are not ideal, we should still encourage learners to keep on reading because research (Krashen, 2004a; 2004b; Lee, 2004) shows encouraging results even under non-ideal conditions. The extent to which the programmes will be successful depends in part on the intensity and duration of the extensive reading programme. The more time allotted to the programme, and the more the students read, the greater the likelihood that they will become effective and efficient readers. As Schell states, 'The amount of time spent in actual reading may be the most important factor in reading growth' (Schell, 1991:115). Finding ways to encourage learners inside and outside the classroom to extend their reading is difficult, especially for less able students. At the same time, it is important not to be discouraged by constraints or limitations. Lai's students (1993a; 1993b) showed gains even during a summer programme.

A great number of extensive reading empirical studies stress the increase in learners' reading amount after the programme (e.g. Cohen, 1997; Pilgreen & Krashen, 1993; Rodrigo, Greenberg, Burke, Hall, Berry, Brinck, Joseph & Oby, 2007; Tse, 1996), and note how this increase helps improve learners' proficiency (e.g. McLaughlin, 1989; Nassaji, 2003; Nation, 2001; Pigada & Schmitt, 2006; Saragi *et al.*, 1978; Zahar *et al.*, 2001). Some studies focus on training in reading skills (e.g. Anderson, 1991; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989) or the relationship between reading skills and comprehension (e.g. Kern, 1994). To be able to understand the text, one needs to successfully complete many processes, as mentioned earlier in 2.4.2.3 yet fewer studies of the effect of ER also look at individuals' reading skills. This may be because in order to obtain additional data on reading skills, one would require longitudinal and qualitative data, possibly collected through observation or thinking aloud, which is more time-consuming than quantitative data collection. What researchers studying the effect of extensive reading programmes often do is use a large number of participants to ensure validity and reliability. Qualitative data collection with a large sample would be problematic. In addition, when investigating reading skills with the sort of large sample typically studied in ER studies, a potential problem is individual variation in reading skills. This adds another complex factor to the study, in addition to individuals' proficiency level and level of reading materials. Potentially, each process could go wrong and this increases the difficulty of the analysis. This probably explains why those studies which do look at skills or strategies have tended to look at the effect of one and its relation to a narrow aspect of language proficiency, and have not included ER.

Williams (2007) suggests that implementing ER programmes also requires sensitivity towards the cultural-educational context. He reports on the evaluation of an English ER programme in primary schools in Africa, in Malawi. The programme involved the delivery of book boxes for Years 4 and 5 to every Malawian primary school from 1995 to 1999. Test results in six schools unexpectedly showed a statistically significant decrease in mean scores. The 1995 cohort achieved significantly higher scores than the 1999 cohort, indicating that the ER initiative had not been successful in boosting reading attainment scores. A number of factors were identified as the reason of the failure, e.g. the low teacher morale throughout the period of the project, the pilot deficiencies on book levels, the teacher training deficiencies and the underuse of books.

As we have seen, extensive reading can take place in many forms to fit in the

context and meet the purpose of application. A quick review of this approach finds it takes different forms and lengths, through different materials on various subjects, and thus is considered suitable for extra-curricular input without adding an extra burden to a school timetable. Now we turn to the characteristics of books for beginners at the primary level.

2.5.2 Children's Books as Learning Media

Children's literature is created for children to read and appreciate and enjoy (Li & Luo, 2000; S. Lin, 1988). According to Glazer (1997:7), the contents of successful children's books are written based on an understanding of children. Stories are usually shorter than adults'. The main characters are usually children and the plots are mostly descriptions about characters' movements rather than their thoughts. Although children's literature seems to be easy to comprehend, children sometimes still need adults' help to relate their life experience to the books, to enhance higher thinking skills, because of children's limited psychological and cognitive maturation, memory and lack of experience (Chambers, 1973; F. Lin, 2004a; S. Lin, 2003a; S. Tsai, 1989). According to Li and Luo (2000), good children's literature is child-centered, created and organised according to a child's point of view, normally has a positive educational function and concerns the beauty of language. D. Wu (1991) and S. Lin (1988) also stress that children's life experiences, psychology and interests should be considered in children's literature and the language must be lively and suitable for children to read.

There are several types of children's books. M. Liao (1999) classified them into five categories: wordless books, picture books (including alphabet books, predictable books and easy-to-read books), concept books, information books and short novels. Each type of book has a unique form, content and function for different reading purposes. Among these various types, picture books, in which pictures are the major part, have attracted more attention from language teachers than the others. Reading should be an enjoyable experience and should be made easy for young readers, but it is neither if a child has to read the words without first having any idea what they will be about. Pictures, on the other hand, allow children to tap into knowledge and experiences that are relevant to the particular book. This knowledge enables them to predict the story and enjoy it as well. Good pictures complement and extend the written language and because they give vital clues to the meaning of the story, they should be taken advantage of rather than ignored (Solomon, 1990a:59). C. Chen and M. Liao (1999) argue that predictable books are suitable for children who have just

started to read where the characteristics of such books is that the language and/or plot is predictable. The sentence patterns might be repeated with one or two words changes each time. This repetition also develops learners' formulaic knowledge,³⁶ which then functions as a base for language expansion.

With respect to L2 acquisition, Schmidt (1990) argues that our implicit knowledge (acquired knowledge system) contains both formulaic knowledge and rule-based knowledge. According to him, the former plays a very important role in language development, especially for early stage learners. It acts as the base for learners to build other structures during their learning. Myles (2004) proposes that when such formulaic strings are acquired, 'they remain grammatically advanced until the grammar catches up, and it is this process of resolving the tension between these grammatically advanced chunks and the current grammar which drives the learning process forward' (Myles, 2004:152). In other words, formulaic knowledge provides learners with a databank of complex structures beyond their current grammar, which according to Myles, they keep working on until they can make their current grammar compatible with them. Applied to reading, formulaic knowledge can be reinforced through multiple exposure in meaningful contexts and slowly expands until the learners are ready to generate rule-based knowledge. Through re-reading books at the right level which are full of such input, learners' implicit knowledge thus expands. Predictable books and books with high language repetition can be a very good resource to build this type of knowledge and this is also the reason why predictable books are recommended for language teaching materials. This viewpoint may parallel Krashen's Input Hypothesis in the importance of taking in some input which is not yet comprehensible at the time and then becomes comprehensible later.

With respect to ELT classrooms, Brewster, Ellis and Girard (2002:188) separate children's English storybooks into two types. First, many of the storybooks used with young learners are adapted and simplified versions of popular fairy tales, fables, nursery rhymes or specifically written stories. These books are commonly referred to as graded readers and are often produced to supplement the syllabus of a particular course where the vocabulary and structures are carefully graded in a sequence. Usually they are intended to be used by the learner working alone to develop reading skills, rather than by the teacher for reading aloud, as the starting point for other related language work. During the 1990s many EFL teachers also began using authentic storybooks, also termed real books, which are written for children whose L1

³⁶ Different terms have been used in the research to refer to formulaic strings, e.g. chunks, prefabricated routines, formulaic sequences, unanalysed formulae, rote-learned sequences and ready-made formulae (Myles, 2004:141).

is English, but which can be suitable for those learning English as an L2, if carefully selected. The language is not selected or graded. Many, however, contain language traditionally found in most syllabi for young learners. The advantage of using authentic storybooks is that they provide examples of real language and offer a rich source of authentic input, especially in terms of vocabulary. The authors consider authentic storybooks to be very motivating for a child as they experience a strong sense of achievement at having worked with a real book. Furthermore, the quality of illustration is generally of a high standard,³⁷ appealing to the young learner, and aiding general comprehension. In addition, children's storybooks are usually short enough to be finished in 15 minutes for daily learning (Day & Bamford, 1998:98).

Now, I will look more closely at the argument for using English children's books in language learning and their value in both theory and practice and some suggested criteria for book selection. According to X. Tsai (2004) and J. Wang (2006), the theoretical background of using English children's books in second language learning is a 'whole language approach', which stresses the use of authentic, meaningful and interesting materials. The aim of such an approach is to create a meaningful, stress-free, learner-centered and authentic learning environment where learning the second language is like learning the L1 (Adunyarittigun, 1993; Palzelt, 1995). Its advocates believe that 'language is a whole' and dividing language into parts destroys it (Rigg, 1991). It further involves the belief that language is for thinking and communication and focuses on its use in the social context. That is, we always use language purposefully. The learning of language should integrate rather than separate the four skills and therefore, in the curriculum, language functions are authentic and meaningful (Richards & Rogers, 2001), and activities and materials are real. Moreover, the advocates of whole language believe that because knowledge is constructed in certain social contexts (Rigg, 1991), learning is based on the learner's real experience and background knowledge (Palzelt, 1995). Therefore, learning should focus on learners' experiences, emotions, needs and interests (Richards & Rogers, 2001).

Because Whole Language emphasizes the use of authentic and meaningful materials in FLT that are relevant to students' life experiences, everything written in real life for native speakers can be the media of English learning. This includes literature; thus this approach is strongly related to using English children's books as English learning materials (X. Tsai, 2004; J. Wang, 2006).

³⁷ In the last two decades, many publishers have been developing graded readers for the large need of language learner literature (see Day & Bamford, 1998 for definition). Nowadays, graded readers can be very similar to real books in terms of quality of illustration and length for different learner needs.

Studies have shown the benefits of authentic children's books in many aspects. Ghosn (2002:173) provides four reasons to use such books in primary EFL programmes:³⁸

1. Authentic literature provides a motivating, meaningful context for language learning, since children are naturally drawn to stories.
2. Literature can contribute to language learning. It presents natural language, language at its finest, and can thus foster vocabulary development in context.
3. Literature can promote academic literacy and thinking skills, and prepare children for English-medium instruction.
4. Literature can function as a change agent: good literature deals with some aspects of human condition, and can thus contribute to the emotional development of the child, and foster positive interpersonal and intercultural attitudes.

In language learning studies, the use of children's books has attracted a lot of attention. F. Lin (2004a), after reviewing studies, suggested that using children's literature for language learning can help demonstrate grammatical constructions, help learners learn English in a low anxiety context, help learners be aware and understand cultural differences (see also H. Huang, 2002a), initiate learners' voluntary reading, help teachers with their learners' pronunciation and grammatical problems, and make learners creative. These fit the features of ER approach mentioned earlier in section 2.5. J. Wang (2006) points out that children's educational achievement is usually related to their early experience with listening to story reading. Listening to stories and discussing plots prepares children for reading on their own. The reading experience of picture books can then be crucial for children's language learning; it facilitates the development of the concepts of language, such as the function of language, the relationship between spoken and written language, language conventions, ideas of a storyline, the expression of literal and colloquial language and the meanings that words carry (L. Li, 1991), and the language children receive is stored in their language database (Kryszewska, 2007). Students can learn to appreciate literature and develop a habit of reading English books through reading English children's books (Chen & Liao, 1999:206). Also, learners can experience phonic forms and rules, learn the correlation of letter and their pronunciation, and see new vocabulary and sentence patterns in a meaningful language context (W. Zhan, 2001a). In short, English children's books present rich input. As Wells (2007) presented at the International Association of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL) conference, a reader can discover the power of language through words, familiarize

³⁸ Even though Ghosn may be right, the claim is controversial without a rigorous comparison with graded readers. In addition, Ghosn's use of 'good literature' is not clearly defined in the article.

themselves with the sustained meaning-building organization of written language, experience events beyond the here and now through language, particularly the vocabulary which is communicated.

The value of applying children's literature in L2 learning has received empirical support. In Taiwan, S. Chen (2003) used English children's books in the kindergarten curriculum. She discussed the contents of books with students both in English and Chinese and found that children's English books could attract students' attention and motivate them. Y. Chien (2000) used predictable books (page 69) as reading materials with Taiwanese EFL beginners also at the kindergarten level and found that these developed children's book awareness and directionality of print and print awareness. Without explicit phonics instruction, some children began to construct meaning by using grapho-phonemic knowledge in order to make sense of the story. M. Liao (2003) also had positive results from using English children's books as the major material in fifth graders' English classes in Taiwan. Research also shows that English children's books improved the spelling, reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition of learners (e.g. Y. Zeng, 2007) and aroused learners' learning motivation and improved their confidence (C. Chang, 2002; M. Liao, 1999; Y. Shen, 2003).

Although children's books have many benefits for second/foreign language learning, choosing the most suitable books is a major concern. C. Chen (2002) suggested that books with simple language, repeated sentence patterns and beautiful pictures are the most suitable. Wordless books, picture books, alphabet books and predictable books are very good choices. M. Liao (2003) recommends books that have received awards, such as those that have the Caldecott award and Newberry award. J. Zheng (1999) sets out five book selection criteria:

1. The grammar structure and vocabulary of books fit students' English level.
For young or beginner learners, storybooks with repeated sentences and vocabulary and predictable plots are appropriate.
2. The contents of books accord with students' cognition and intelligence.
3. The contents of books are interesting to the students.
4. The contents of books are related to children's living environment. If the contents involve foreign customs or values as against students' culture, these books might not be suitable.
5. The contents of books fit the lesson objectives and can work with other teaching material and activities.

Similarly, Glazer (1997) proposes nine criteria for evaluating picture books:

1. Text and illustration should both build the story.
2. The style and medium of the illustrations should be appropriate for the text.
3. The language should be clear and evocative.
4. Characters should be well delineated and developed.
5. Textbook and illustrations should be free of stereotypes.
6. The setting, if specific, should be presented accurately in both text and illustrations.
7. The book's tone should not be condescending.
8. The book's size, type, jacket title, page design, and spacing of text and illustrations should be appropriate for the content of the book.
9. The paper and binding should be durable and of high quality.

Despite all the advantages outlined above, and clear book selection criteria, we still face difficulties in using children's storybooks (real books) for EFL ER programmes. Firstly, the definition of 'good' or 'suitable' books is vague. As mentioned earlier in 2.5.1.4, grammatical difficulty is an important factor regarding proficiency improvement. Although children's storybooks may contain shorter sentences and fewer words, this does not mean the books are easier in terms of morpho-syntax. Even if we use graded readers, we could still face the problem of introducing unfamiliar grammar too early. Secondly, when ER programmes take place in an EFL context, e.g. Taiwan, there may be a gap between the vocabulary and grammar in the books learners choose and what they have actually been taught. This is particularly crucial for vocabulary. If the words on the curriculum list do not match the words in reading materials, it is unlikely the learners will learn these from the storybooks. Then, the learners might not be able to improve and thus lose interest. As far as I am aware, text difficulty and proficiency improvement is a relatively unexplored area and thus the present study looks into it (see Chapter Five).

How adults feel about books will also be crucial for the present study, because adults will use these with their children. E. Kuo (1998) pointed out that both adults and children value the connection between picture books, children's psychology and their interests. While adults read picture books objectively, children care more about their subjective feelings about the books. Adults and children also react differently to the books; children react through body language, adults only use facial expressions. Nevertheless, both adults and children are influenced by and can benefit from reading together.

From the above discussion, we have seen how important input and exposure are and how learners seem to be able to benefit from an extensive reading approach to improve their proficiency. However, a learner's improvement also depends on how much s/he reads. Therefore, the next question should be how young learners can best be encouraged to engage in extensive reading.

2.5.3 Enhancement to the extra-curricular extensive reading programme— Family Literacy

Reading in an unfamiliar language is hard work, especially for young beginners, because they still are immature with respect to many reading strategies, they lack real world experience to understand some plots or cultural differences, and have short concentration spans. Asking young beginners to read independently in a new language when they have little vocabulary is equal to putting them in a nightmare, and they will probably give up very soon, long before they know the pleasure of it. Therefore, they will need someone to guide them through the process until they can read independently and like it. After teachers, the family is the next choice for support in this process because they are the ones with whom young children spend most time after school. According to Epstein (1990), parents contribute to their children's intellectual growth in a number of ways, including preparing their children for school, placing a value on education, conveying belief in their children's scholastic ability and encouraging language development and comprehension through reading.

Although many studies concerning parental involvement have been carried out, they have mostly been on native language reading, for instance, family literacy programmes such PACT (Parents and Children and Teachers), PACE (Parent's Aid for Children's Education) and CAPER (Children and Parents Enjoying Reading) or PACER (Reading just for fun). More and more L2 acquisition researchers have started to see the value of the family as a resource and are starting to work in this area. Generally speaking, family literacy does not mean exclusively reading at home, but activities simply involving reading and writing at home can be called 'family literacy'. Stegeline (2003) defines family literacy as reading and writing activities that are shared by members of the family. These activities include writing shopping lists, greeting cards, thank-you notes, and reading stories. Research suggests that there is a high correlation between family storybook reading and literacy learning for children (e.g. Bus, van Ijendoorn and Pelligrini (1995),

Chang and Lin (2006), Edwards (1995), and Sénéchal (1997)).

The family also provides a natural learning environment (Foster-Cohen, 2002). Kamber and Tan (2003:10) stated that with the help from the family, children show improved reading scores, speak English more fluently, and they state that they enjoy school more. Werner (2000) presents a case study of a three-year-old child's emergent literacy where it was found that literacy can begin before schooling and that a family-based literate environment can allow preschoolers to develop enormous potential in literacy development. Bus and van Ijzendoorn (1988) stated that family literacy in a native language contributes to children's alphabet knowledge, early phonological awareness and later reading skills. Thus, parents should be encouraged to work on basic reading skills at home to help develop emergent literacy. Importantly, family literacy seems to facilitate children's early literacy development regardless of family economic status (Bus & Van Ijzendoorn, 1988). Haney and Hill (2004) actually examined the skills that parents taught to children and the relationship of teaching activity and literacy outcome. The results revealed that parents' direct teaching of literacy skills 86% of the time (particularly letter names (71%) and sounds (65%)) and the frequency of exposure to tasks constructed children's knowledge of reading. Family education thus plays a crucial role in children's early literacy development. It can also be made good use of in L2 learning. C. Wang (2001a) points out that the advantages of parent-child book reading are: improving parent-child relationships, promoting language ability, developing communicative ability, broadening knowledge, improving writing ability, exchanging experience and ideas, thinking individually and providing entertainment. Teale and Sulzby (1986) suggested that the home environment can be the source for three broad categories of literacy experiences that can be instrumental in nurturing early literacy skills: (i) activities where children interact with adults in writing and reading situations; (ii) activities where children are able to explore print independently; and (iii) experiences where children observe adults modeling literacy behaviours.

From a theoretical viewpoint, family reading can be said to be based on the idea of scaffolding. Vygotsky (1978) proposed that there is a distance between what a child can actually do independently and what s/he can accomplish with help from adults. This distance is called the 'zone of proximal development'. When children are unable to accomplish a task by themselves, they need help from someone who is more knowledgeable. Through interactive activities with the knowledgeable one, the child can accomplish a difficult task, thus acquiring knowledge about how to

deal with the difficulty without help (Ellis, 2003:48). The help from the knowledgeable one is called 'scaffolding' (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976). Wood and Middleton (1975) used the term scaffolding to describe how adults help children according to children's current capabilities. Effective scaffolding, in which helpers gradually reduce their level of support with children's increasing independent task performance, seems to benefit children in their cognitive development (Wood, 1980). This idea can be applied to early literacy development, when a child cannot yet accomplish a reading task. Children can, through the interaction with their parents, gain support and develop their reading skills and language knowledge and consequently develop their literacy ability (Sheet & Buyer, 1999; J. Wang, 2006).

In addition, as mentioned earlier in section 2.4.2.3, the extensive reading approach is a rather slow way to acquire vocabulary. In order to read independently for general reading comprehension, Laufer (1997) and Nuttall (1996:63) claim that the reader needs a vocabulary of 3,000 word families or 5,000 lexical items in the lexicon, as this would cover 90-95 % of any text. Below this threshold, reading strategies become ineffective (Urquhart & Weir, 1998:2). Young beginning EFL learners hardly have this word number in their lexicon and thus they can hardly read independently for comprehension. They thus need help from peers, teachers or parents.

One very important benefit, we must not forget, is how well parents know their children's true reading or language ability and how quickly parents can rapidly discover their children's problems in learning to read. Nevertheless, there are still some barriers to parent-child reading:

1. Parents might not read themselves or be able to provide their children with enough reading materials and the right environment.
2. Parents do not have positive or correct ideas of reading themselves.
3. Children are forced to read and they lose reading interest.
4. Parents downplay the value of reading. (C. Wang, 2001a)

S. Chen (2003) also points out that the biggest barrier of parent-child joint reading is insufficient participation of the parents. Though many parents might know that parent-child reading is beneficial, not many of them will read with their children frequently (J. Wang, 2006).

Although parent-based interventions may offer a low-cost alternative to help

children's literacy skills, the two most widely studied parent-tutoring programmes, *Paired Reading* (Morgan & Lyon, 1979) in the UK and *Pause, Prompt, Praise* (PPP) (Glynn, McNaughton, Robinson & Quinn, 1979) by the New Zealand Council, have produced mixed results. The efficacy of *Paired Reading* is unclear. A number of studies suggest this programme can be used to improve children's reading accuracy and comprehension (Leach & Sidall, 1990; Topping & McNight, 1984). However, these studies have been criticised for narrowly defined measures, small gains and lack of attention to parent implementation (Law & Kratochwill, 1993). Law and Kratochwill's (1993) study of Paired Reading failed to demonstrate significant improvement in children's reading skills. In a review of 12 studies, Glynn and McNaughton (1985) suggested that use of PPP procedures results in significant improvements in children's reading abilities. However, lack of comparison groups and small sample sizes raise concern over the effectiveness of PPP (Goyen & McClelland, 1994). Follow-up studies (Goyen & McClelland, 1994; Leach & Sidall, 1990) with more rigorous methodology have failed to demonstrate significant improvements in children's reading ability (Stoltz & Fischel, 2003).

In the UK, *the National Literacy Strategy – Framework for Teaching* (Department for Education and Employment, 1998a) sets out the teaching objectives to enable children aged five to eleven to become fully literate, from September 1998. It also gives guidance on the 'National Literacy Hour' that should take place in every classroom each day. The policy requires primary teachers to teach a daily English lesson in which learners are taught for the first half of the lesson as a whole class, reading together, extending their vocabulary, looking at the phonetics of words and being taught grammar, punctuation and spelling. The teacher led part of the hour should be interactive with the teacher modeling what the learners have to do and the learners increasingly joining in the activity so that they have the confidence to work on their own in the second half of the lesson. For the last half of the lesson they will work in groups or individually with the teacher focusing on one group. The lesson ends with feedback from the children on what they have been doing in relation to the objectives of the lesson. The National Literacy Hour represents a significant shift away from working with children on an individual basis, towards whole-class and group teaching. Inevitably the time available to hear children read on a regular and individual basis is reduced. Within the Literacy Hour the teacher works with groups, and hearing children read is acknowledged increasingly as a task for parents who are, therefore, critical to the strategy's success. To secure and sustain the reading partnership, the Government has proposed a fourfold framework in which parents will be (Department for Education and Employment, 1998b): (1) informed about the strategy through

displays, leaflets, meetings and offered the opportunity of observing the Literacy Hour; (2) involved at home, helping with reading and writing and sharing targets and records; (3) involved in school by helping during the Literacy Hour and with other activities; (4) supported in the form of workshops and training courses. Programmes like *Children and Parents Enjoying Reading (CAPER)* have been developed to involve parents collaborate with the school by providing the essential individual complementary support which enables children to practise and build upon the lessons in the Literacy Hour.

Rasinski (1995) started a reading programme for parents to practise with their children at home in the US. He indicated the importance of parental involvement in helping primary grade students to progress in reading. In the Fast Start reading programme, parents got a package of reading materials, instruction and information about reading from school. The reading programme involved parents reading to children, pair reading and some word activities. Rasinski claims that this programme had a positive effect on children's word recognition, reading fluency, and overall reading proficiency. Some researchers have also tested the effects of Rasinski's Fast Start programme. They chose 30 first-grade (age 6) students and their parents to participate in this study for 11 weeks. The experimental group received Fast Start training and the control group used the typical way of parental involvement. The study indicated generally positive perceptions of the programme especially for beginner readers (Rasinski & Stevenson, 2005). Some other researchers also indicated that parent-child reading experience can facilitate children's development of receptive and expressive language abilities and emerging and early literacy skills (Adams, 1990; Leseman & de Jong, 1998; van Kleeck, Gillam, Hamilton & McGrath, 1997).

Recently, researchers in Taiwan have started to investigate the effect on children's English learning of family support together with other various factors. For instance, X. Tsai's (2004) study involved parents in children's English learning by providing extra-curricular English classes for parents to join in class with their primary age children (age range: 6-12, average: 9). The programme structure was based on children's English classes, with parents sitting next to their children. Unfortunately, the participants' proficiency was not tested. The study did not stress parents' role in assisting and participating, either. Later, J. Wang (2006) studied five pairs of children and parents during an eight-week family reading project to understand how parents read English children's books with their children, to figure out the techniques and tips parents use, to understand what this reading means to the participants, and understand the difficulties in practice and how parents deal with them. The results showed that

each pair of participants exhibited varied and often unique processes of reading. Children experienced little joy in the reading and the parents only did this for their children's sake. The difficulties that parents encountered included their lack of confidence in their own English ability, arousing the child's interest, and the often near-impossibility of scheduling a regular reading time. Unfortunately, children's proficiency improvement was not included in the study again. To find out how shared reading can influence children's learning, Y. Zeng (2007) case-studied a third grader and her high-school graduate mother who volunteered to engage in a three-month study of shared reading of English storybooks. Through observation, the study investigated the way the mother approached the task of telling stories, the interaction between mother and child and its influence on reading growth. The results showed that reading activity had a positive impact on both mother and the child. In particular, the child gained vocabulary awareness and the knowledge of how to process information from the text. The discussions between mother and child greatly helped comprehension of meaning. The mother's perception of shared reading changed from one of doubt and reservation to confidence and optimism. The child became highly motivated to learn English after the study. However, reading did not continue after the study because of lack of books and help from the researcher. X. Wang's (2000) study of upper graders (age 11-12) showed that learning achievement positively correlated with family language interaction. Moreover, Su (2003) reported that students who had more parental support used language learning strategies more frequently than those who had less parental support. The more the parents supported their children's learning of English, the more language learning strategies the children used. Research has also suggested that a strong relationship exists between learning strategy use and motivation (Osanai, 2000 ; Oxford & Ehrman, 1995; Su, 2003; Wharton, 2000). Although in Su's study, the relationship between parental support, learning strategies and motivation was indirect, parental support can still be one of the factors in motivation. The above studies show that in general, family support has a positive influence on children's achievement.

Many researchers investigated factors of home literacy, e.g. interaction and strategy use, in order for interventions to be optimal. Stegelin (2003) reviewed the characteristics of family literacy and pointed out three specific strategies which parents and children should use in the goal of family literacy achievement. Firstly, parents should establish a routine to read to their children. Here literacy does not just mean books, but also magazines and work-related materials. In order to practise this idea, parents can bring their children to the library in their community. Secondly, with the help from an adult, children associate book reading with pleasurable experiences

and feelings. Thirdly, the family can provide a literacy rich environment. Some researchers point out that children with an early interest in reading and writing tend to spend playtime at home writing and drawing with paper and crayons or looking at books. Thus, literacy activities concerning reading, writing, listening, speaking, and parental involvement are correlated and intertwined.

One of the many characteristics of parent-child reading is 'shared reading', a term coined by Holdaway (1979). Shared reading is usually held with some follow-up activities, such as re-reading several times, acting out the story, drawing favorite parts, re-writing and further discussion of the contents and characters. This activity was first practised in school where a teacher, holding big illustrated books, is surrounded by a group of students and, later on, this was extended to home-based reading. Shared reading can take place in many forms. It can be the adult reading the whole book to the child (particularly a young child), the child reading along with the adult, the adult and the child taking turns reading or the child reading the whole book to the adult (Sheet & Buyer, 1999). Through parents' model reading of the story in the beginning (perhaps on many occasions), young learners become familiar with the story and develop the ability to retell the story until they can read independently (Tomlinson, 2007). Through interaction, higher level skills can be initiated, which for an L2 learner facilitates the acquisition of the language. Sharing a book between parent and child is an important activity because (Smith, Shirley & Visser, 1996b:10-12):

1. It is a process of active involvement.
2. It helps the child's language development.
3. It establishes the importance of reading and lets the child into some of its 'secrets', e.g., page turning, sequence beginning and end of story, sentences.
4. Talking together about the pictures helps the child express him or herself clearly – when the child does much of the talking.
5. Naming objects both familiar and unknown helps to build knowledge of words.
6. It can demonstrate to the child that books are important and that the adult enjoys reading them.
7. Listening to stories helps a child to concentrate.
8. Reading the same stories repeatedly helps the child to remember the words.
9. Sharing books in a relaxed manner will help the child to equate books with contentment and sense of security.

Family reading is often associated with higher motivation to read, too. To succeed in reading, knowing how to read is not enough; learners must also be willing to read.

Positive motivation has been strongly related to favorable learning outcomes, such as higher reading achievement, deeper cognitive processing, greater conceptual understanding, and willingness to persevere (Allington, 1986; Anderson, Wilson & Fielding, 1988; Hidi, 1990; Tobias, 1994; J. Wang, 2006; Y. Zeng, 2007).

Motivation is usually referred to as the mental state that makes one initiate and sustain something. For example, Dörnyei & Ottó define it as

‘the dynamically changing cumulative arousal in a person that initiates, directs, coordinates, amplifies, terminates, and evaluates the cognitive and motor processes whereby initial wishes and desires are selected, prioritized, operationalised and (successfully or unsuccessfully) acted out (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998:65).’

The most influential motivation theory in the L2 field was proposed by Gardner & Lambert (1959). Their earliest studies were of Anglophone grade 11 students in Montreal, studying French as a second language. A factor analysis of a set of variables assessing language aptitude (language learning ability), verbal ability, attitudes, motivation and oral/aural skill in French identified three factors, two of which shared variance in common with the measure of French proficiency. One was defined primarily by the measures of language aptitude and verbal ability, and was identified as ‘Language Aptitude’. The other was comprised of measures of attitudes toward French Canadians, motivation to learn French, and Orientation (in which individuals indicated the relative importance of different reasons, reflecting either ‘integrative’ or ‘instrumental’ orientations, for them personally to learn French). This factor was defined as ‘Motivation’, and was further described as ‘characterized by a willingness to be like valued members of the language community’ (Gardner & Lambert, 1959:271). It is the two orientations labeled as ‘integrative’ and ‘instrumental’ that have since become the most widely known concepts and received the most empirical attention. Integrative orientation refers to the desire to learn a language in order to interact with, and perhaps to identify with, members of the L2 community. It is seen as the key to sustain inner drive or more ‘intrinsic’ style of motivation. Instrumental orientation describes reasons for L2 learning that reflect practical goals, such as attaining an academic goal or job advancement. Gardner and Lambert’s early work (1959; 1972) suggested that because it was related to positive attitudes towards the L2 community, integrative orientation was a better predictor of eventual proficiency than the instrumental orientation.

Research over the past forty years suggests that there are at least two limitations to this hypothesis. First, the relative predictive power of each orientation was found to be inconsistent (Au, 1988). Although some studies indicated that integrative orientation was a good predictor of L2 variables (e.g. Gardner & Lambert, 1959), others found that instrumental orientation was an equivalent or a better predictor than the integrative orientation (e.g. Chilara & Oller, 1978; Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Lukmani, 1972; Oller, Hudson & Liu, 1977). It has also been argued (cf. Gardner, 1985) that these two orientations are not mutually exclusive, and that both orientations could sustain effort. Not only might both orientations support effort, the integrative orientation may not be relevant to many learners. In a study of learners in different contexts, Clément and Kruidenier (1983; Kruidenier & Clément, 1986); found that the integrative orientation was only evident in particular contexts and that four other orientations, including the instrumental orientation, had cross-contextual relevance. This study thus brings into question the universal necessity of the integrative orientation as a determinant of other motivational and proficiency variables, and raises the theoretical question of what psychological mechanism explains any differential predictive power that the two orientations might have (Noels, 2001).

The second concern is that there may be additional orientations besides integrative and instrumental, a point Gardner & Lambert have argued since their early studies (1959; 1972). For instance, people may wish to learn an L2 in order to be intellectually stimulated, to show off to friends, because of fascination with aspects of the language (Oxford & Shearin, 1994), because of a need for achievement and stimulation (Dörnyei, 1990), interest and curiosity (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991), or a desire for assimilation (Graham, 1985). Many other orientations have been described empirically, including travel, friendship, and knowledge orientations (Clément & Kruidenier, 1983), identification-influence (Noels & Clément, 1989), prestige-influence (Moïse, Clément & Noels, 1990), career and school instrumental (Belmechi & Hummel, 1998), media usage (Clément, Dörnyei & Noels, 1994), national security (Kraemer, 1993), as well as combinations of these (e.g., 'instrumental-knowledge' found by Clément *et al.*, 1994). A limitation of these studies is that there has been little attempt to systematically organise the various orientations in such a way as to indicate the psychological mechanisms by which a given orientation sustains effort, desire and positive affect over the long term (Noels, 2001:44).

Dörnyei (2001:34, 78) argued that little attention has been paid to parental influence on L2 motivation, although it was considered a major component by Gardner (1985) in his social psychological theory because parents were seen to 'act as the major

intermediary between the cultural milieu and the student (1985:109)'. Accordingly, he devoted a chapter to the issue in his 1985 book, and the standardized motivation test Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) (Gardner, 1985) also contains a whole scale measuring 'parental encouragement'.

Gardner (1985) has identified two main dimensions of the role that parents play in their children's learning process: (a) an active role, which involves encouragement, support and monitoring, and (b) a passive role, which involves indirect modeling and communicating attitudes related to L2 learning and the L2 community. He presents empirical evidence for both types of influence and concludes that although in many cases the two are in harmony, when they are not, the passive role becomes more effective. This implies that even educationally appropriate support practices (e.g. encouraging children to prepare their homework) can be overruled by latent negative language attitudes harboured by the parents. In order to test Gardner's dual influence hypothesis, Colletta, Clément & Edwards (1983) conducted an empirical survey to examine 'community and parental influence' with regard to Anglophone students enrolled in a French immersion programme in bilingual Ottawa. Their results by and large confirmed Gardner's theory and they also found that active parental influence had a considerable impact on the students' linguistic self-confidence, thus identifying a further L2-specific mediating variable between parental influence and student motivation (the first being the children's language attitudes shaped after their parents'). Gardner, Masgoret & Tremblay (1999) provide further confirmation that parental encouragement is associated with the development of attitudes towards the learning situation and with the language-learning efforts of the children. In addition, Masgoret, Bernaus and Gardner (2001) also reported that children who received parental support tended to be less anxious about using English outside the classroom situation, which fits the expectation of low affective filter (Krashen, 1981; 1982; 1993; 2004b; 2007b) in the present extra-curricular extensive reading study.

As mentioned earlier in the extensive reading (2.5.1), one of the key features for extensive reading programmes is to develop a lifelong reading interest. To achieve this, it is important to emphasise that simply arousing interest is not enough, we need to help learners sustain their interest (Williams & Burden, 1997:120). This lifelong interest of books would start with a home-run book experience (Trelease, 2001)(2.5) and facilitate the learner's intrinsic motivation (Gardner & Lambert, 1972) and inner drive to read voluntarily and continuously, and thus be related to the integrative motivation. With instrumental motivation, the reading behaviour is more likely to stop once the driving force disappears. Research on motivation of reading finds that

people's reading motivations are usually related to learning, occupational need, and personal enrichment (Chen, 2000a), which are more instrumentally oriented. However, for children, reading behaviour is non-intentional. They care more about the entertaining component of the reading materials (Feng, 1997) and therefore are more integratively oriented.

One who reads only for extrinsic rewards might not continue reading when the extrinsic motivation disappears (J. Wang, 2006). Therefore, some educators claimed that the use of extrinsic or instrumental rewards to reading might lessen desirable reading behavior. Smith (1988:124) argues that rewards can backfire:

Show a child that the payoff for reading or writing something is a treat, a token, a happy face or a high mark, and that is what the child will learn is the price literacy should extract. Every child knows that anything accomplished by coercion, no matter how benign, cannot be worth doing in its own right.

However, other researchers have considered that appropriate extrinsic rewards can enhance one's intrinsic motivation (Cameron & Pierce, 1994; Karnoil & Ross, 1977). There are cases in which extrinsic motivation has apparently worked. Carlsen and Sherrill (1988) reported that rewards got learners started reading and kept them reading. Reward might serve, in some cases, as a jump-start; once the child starts reading, the intrinsic pleasure of reading should take over (Krashen, 1993).

High motivation in reading can lead to more reading; one who is motivated to read would simply spend more time reading and therefore gain more from reading. To foster reading motivation Gambrell (2002) suggested three ways to do so: access to reading materials, opportunities for self-selection, and social interaction about books. First, concerning access to reading materials, many studies have shown that students who are surrounded by a lot of books have motivation to read (Elley, 1992; Gambrell, 1995; Guthrie, Van Meter, McCann, Wigfield, Bender, Poundstone, Rice, Faibisch, Junt & Mitchell, 1996; Krashen, 2005a; 2005b; 2007a; Lundberg & Linnakyla, 1993; Morrow, 1992; Neuman & Roskos, 1993; Purcell-Gates, McIntyrem & Freppon, 1995). However, having books accessible for students is not enough. To have someone who promotes reading, e.g. parents, and ways to promote reading are also important (Gambrell, 2002). Second, opportunities for self-selection are influential. Studies have shown that self-selection of materials can promote reading motivation (Coley, 1981). Third, social interaction about books can also foster reading motivation. Research shows that a classroom environment which promotes social interaction about

reading is more likely to promote intrinsic motivation (Ames, 1984; Guthrie, Schafer, Wang & Afflerbach, 1995). Furthermore, the student who engages in frequent discussions about what they read with their friends and family tends to be more motivated to read and has higher reading achievement (Campbell, Hombro & Mazzeo, 2000).

In short, motivation has benefits in reading achievement. To foster motivation, teachers or parents should provide students with plenty of reading materials to read, let them self-select the books they are interested in and encourage them to engage in social interaction about books. These three ways all correspond to the concept of parent-child book reading (J. Wang, 2006).

From the above, we know that many studies emphasize that parent-child book reading benefits children's language development; however, researchers also comment that the parent-child reading style should be considered because the styles have influence on learners' later literacy achievement (Shapiro, Anderson & Anderson, 1997; Wood, 2002). Homes and schools constitute distinctive contexts of interaction: In the home, Freiberg and Freebody (1995) documented a particular set of parameters that define the interactional context: often one-to-one interaction, with consequently fewer talk-management problems; high mutual familiarity of knowledge base, interests and interactive preferences of the learner; a focus on the accurate completion of a reading exercise; and less evident interest in displaying the talk-formats derived from theories of 'good classroom practice'. Stoltz and Fischel (2003), through studying parents' feedback to their children's miscues,³⁹ found that parents ignored 16.75% of their children's miscues. When feedback was provided, it most often took the form of terminal feedback (29.67%); that is, simply supplying the correct word to the child. Wood (2002) investigated the nature of joint pre-school activities in the home and their potential to contribute to the development of early reading skills. The results indicated that children who engaged in a variety of pre-school parent-child activities showed the best achievement in reading one year later. The frequency of joint activities was also found to impact on reading attainment, vocabulary, memory and aspects of phonological awareness. They also found that children who were 'above average' at reading had received more frequent storybook reading than the children who were at or below average. The importance of shared storybook reading for later independent reading ability was reiterated by this study.

³⁹ A miscue was defined as a mistake on a word, such as reading the wrong word, failing to attempt the word or being unable to sound out the word (Stoltz & Fischel, 2003:289)

Otto and John (1994) found that there were three distinct parent-child reading styles: monologue, echo reading and dialogue. In monologue style, parents read the entire text to their children without engaging them in verbal response. In the echo reading style, parents read and pause for their children to repeat. In the dialogue style, parents read the text and elicit responses from their children. De Temple and Tabors (1995) identified four reading styles in their research on 290 low-income mother's speech to their children (age 27 to 63 months) during their reading in the U.S. These four styles are straight readers, standard interactive readers, non-readers and recitation readers. The straight reader-mother reads the book aloud without discussing the book while the standard interactive reader-mother discussed the book with their children during the book reading. The non-reader-mother talks about the book without reading it, while the recitation readers-mother read every word of the text and ask their children to repeat. Haden, Reese, and Fivush (1996) categorised parents into three reading styles during parent-child book reading. The describer-parent describes the book. The comprehender-parent comments on the written language knowledge and the collaborator-parent elicits children's participation and engages more in discussion about the book. Beals and De Temple (1992) concluded that some mothers tend to use high-level/high demand strategy to interact with their children through non-immediate talk, e.g. talking about the character's motivation or explaining about knowledge relevant to the story, while others focus on the information written on the book, e.g. asking the child to name an object, through low-demand strategy. However, these researchers did not say which type of interaction worked best to promote literacy. Baker Mackler, Sonnenschein and Serpell (2001:417) state that 'although there has been much speculation that certain types of talk facilitate reading comprehension, research evidence is scant because there are few longitudinal investigations that follow children beyond the beginning phases of reading instruction.'

Huebner and Meltzoff (2005) consider the key to promoting the reading process and language skills of 2- and 3-year-old children is to have a dialogic reading,⁴⁰ and state that parents do need instruction because the essentials of dialogical reading can be misused especially by high school-only educated parents. This study gave instruction to parents and took place in the USA and was done using three methods: in-person, with video instruction, self-instruction by video with telephone follow up, and

⁴⁰ When most adults share a book with their children, they read and the child listens. In dialogic reading, the adult helps the child become the teller of the story. The adult becomes the listener, the questioner, the audience for the child. The fundamental reading technique in dialogic reading is the PEER sequence. This is a short interaction between a child and the adult. The adult Prompts the child to say something about the book, Evaluates the child's response, Expands the child's response by rephrasing and adding information to it, and Repeats the prompt to make sure the child has learned from the expansion (Whitehurst, 1992).

self-instruction by video. Results showed parents with in-person instruction read better than the self-instruction group. When parents have good dialogic reading strategies, they can provide sufficient help to their children. Rabidoux and MacDonald (2000) emphasized the idea of the collaborative nature of shared storybook reading and claimed the equality and important interaction that occurs between parents and children. By supporting the idea of dialogic reading, Hargrave and Sénéchal (2000) gave as an example (n=36) that pre-school children (age 3-5) with poor vocabulary skills learned new words from home shared reading, particularly dialogic reading in Ottawa, Canada. Consequently, dialogic reading served as a facilitator in shared reading interaction.

Interaction can also help to improve affective quality in reading. Baker, Mackler, Sonnenschein & Serpell (2001) investigated the interaction between first-grade children and their parents in the U.S. during home storybook reading which indicated that positive interactions were associated with meaning-related conversation and negative interactions with identifying unknown words. de Jong & Leseman (2001:396) also got similar results: the more parents talked about non-immediate context of the story, the better the socioemotional quality (i.e. supportive presence, respect for the child's autonomy, effective structuring, and confidence in the success of the ongoing interaction of the interaction). In addition, there were more chances for literacy activities to occur at home. However, there is no evidence that shows that socioemotional quality is related to reading comprehension. Takase's (2004a) longitudinal research on L1 and L2 reading habits of 219 female high school students in Japan concluded that in terms of parents' attitudes toward and involvement in reading, students' reading habits or simply having books around were not enough to motivate them to read. In order to motivate them to read both in their L1 and L2, parents' active involvement in their children's reading was suggested. (Takase, 2004a). The study also revealed that although family reading habits do not seem to have affected some students' reading habits, where parents played an active role in supporting their daughters in their reading, there seems to have been a positive effect. These results imply that the relationship between home and environmental factors and students' reading habits was complex. Just having parents who read, or just having books around the house alone does not seem to lead children to reading. It depended on how the parents and their children interacted with the material resources that were available (p10). Naturally, different reading styles have influences on children's language development. Instead of focusing only on the language, these researchers all suggest that parents should involve children in content discussion and encourage them to use more advanced, more complex language skills (De Temple & Tabors, 1995;

Haden *et al.*, 1996).

Implementing reading stories at home with parental involvement is a relatively new approach to provide more input in EFL contexts. The idea of home extensive reading in English involves many variables and is thus complex. In this chapter, we have reviewed the possible variables from the literature regarding implementing home extensive English reading for primary level learners, which are now summarised in a concept map (Figure 2.1). Whether this new approach is feasible and effective, and how the participants deal with reading is what the present study investigates. As mentioned earlier, both children and parents sometimes have difficulty participating in such programmes. Therefore, the overall research questions in this thesis are:

1. Can 'home extensive reading' succeed in supplementing primary EFL instruction by providing more extra-curricular input?
2. Does home reading positively influence learners' English proficiency?
3. How do the children (and parents) go about the task of reading?

These initial (admittedly general in some cases) research questions will be expanded in the methodology chapter (page 121). But before I introduce the methodology, we will move to the context of the study, Taiwan.

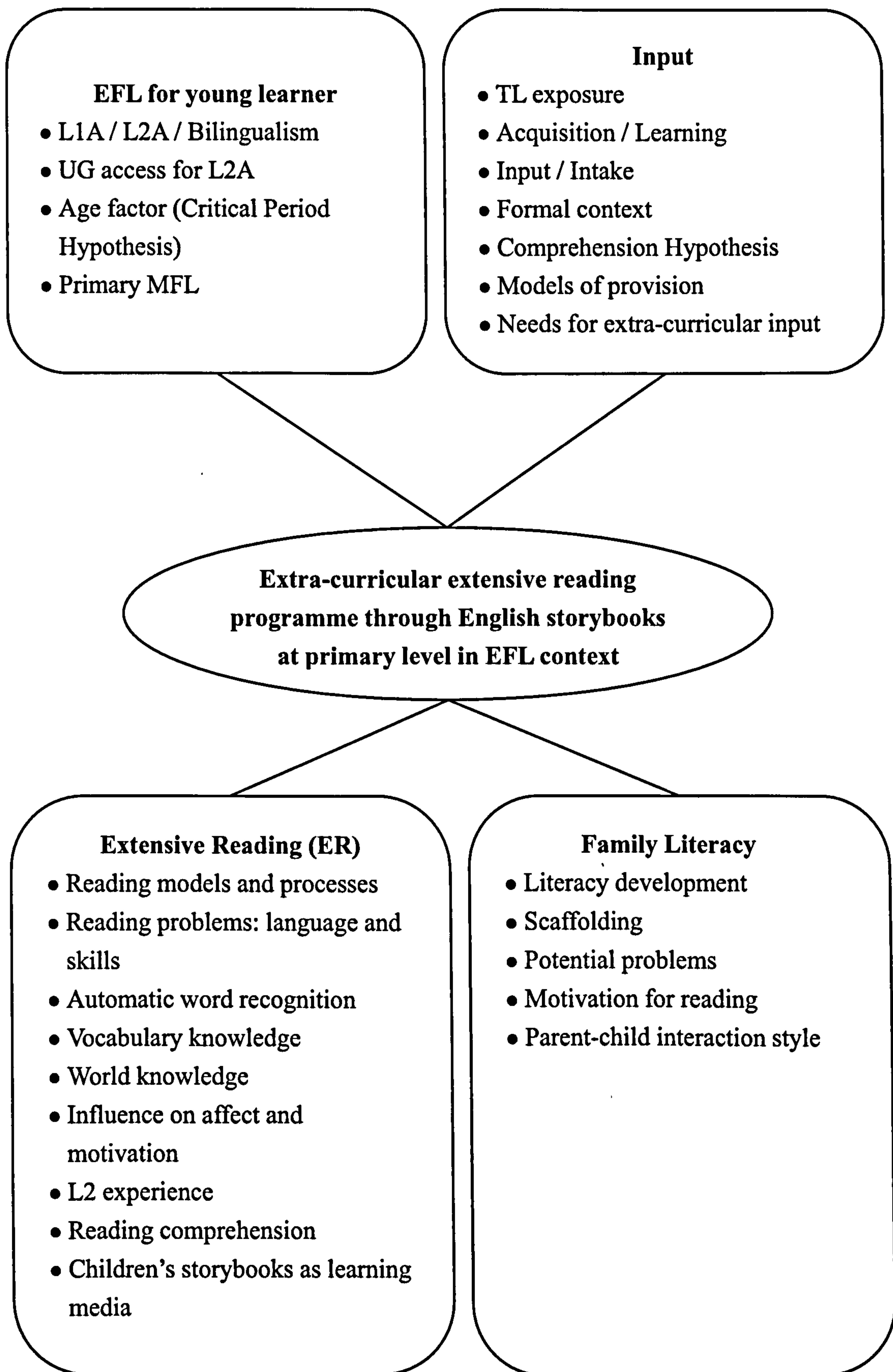


Figure 2.1 A concept map of an extra-curricular English extensive reading programme at primary level in EFL context (based on discussion in chapter two)

Chapter 3 Context of the study

In Chapter 2, the review of provision models worldwide (section 2.3) gave us an idea of how modern foreign language programmes at primary level are approached. Now, we will look at Taiwan, one EFL context, for further (background) information. In this chapter, first, the national Taiwanese curriculum is introduced, including its principles and recommended methodology and materials. This is followed by a discussion of the evaluation and problems reported in the literature on EFL in Taiwan. In the second part, a baseline survey carried out in 2004 is presented to confirm speculation and add details to better understand the Taiwanese context and to highlight the specific issues this thesis addresses.

3.1 Primary English in Taiwan

In Taiwan, general education is compulsory from the age of seven years. All educational establishments, including kindergarten,⁴¹ primary and secondary schools and high schools are governed by the legislation of the Ministry of Education. The actual content of teaching is governed substantially by the textbooks used in all schools in the country. After having been approved by expert commissions in the Ministry of Education, which assess the suitability of textbooks in terms of their compliance with their syllabi, a recommended list of teaching materials is drawn up.

In the Taiwanese educational system, compulsory education lasts for 9 years, in principle, until the age of 14 years. It is provided by state schools as well as private schools under the latest national curriculum, General Guidelines of Grade 1-9 Curriculum of Elementary and Junior High School Education (GGGC) (Ministry of Education of R.O.C.). It is divided into two stages: The first stage of education caters for children between the ages of 7 and 12 (primary grad 1-6, stage 1), and the second stage comprises children between 12, 13, and 14 (junior high school grad 1-3, stage 2) (Taiwan Elementary and Secondary Educator Community, 1999). Here, I focus only on the primary school level because this is the focus of the present thesis.

As discussed in chapter two, in recent years, many European (e.g. Germany, Greece,

⁴¹ Kindergarten is part of obligatory education and thus is free. Similar to GGGC, MOE (Ministry of Education) only had outlines of kindergarten curriculum. Local government and schools decide their own syllabus. The courses usually included language, physical education, mathematics, art and humanism, social studies (Wang, In Progress).

Italy, Spain, and UK) and East Asian countries (e.g. Japan, Korea, and Thailand) have taken steps to introduce the teaching of English to children at an earlier age (see 2.3 for models of provision). For example, in a recent action plan approved by the European Commission, new policies are introduced for an improvement in European Union citizens' language skills. It is a priority for European countries to ensure that language learning in kindergarten and primary school is effective and that it is necessary to improve the mastery of basic skills, in particular by teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age (Commission of the European Communities report, 2003:7). In a similar vein, foreign language policy has undergone changes in Taiwan. Before the government instituted primary school English education, many schools had run (experimental) English programmes to meet the demand of society either with or without the support of any authoritative agencies. According to a survey conducted in spring 1997, about 20% of primary schools in Taiwan had English classes at that time (Shi *et al.*, 1998). Another field study showed that a year later, in spring 1998, this percentage had risen to nearly 50% (Dai, 1998). Research involving specific case studies covered different areas islandwide (Chen, 1998a; Wang, Yeh, Hong, Yen, Chang & Tsai, 2001; Zhan & Liou, 2000). The popularity of primary English classes throughout the island paved the way for the nationwide implementation of primary English instruction.

According to Z. Lin (2004b) and M. Shi (2005), among the 25 cities and counties in Taiwan, nine of them have started primary school English from the 1st grade, three from 2nd grade, seven from 3rd grade, one from 4th grade, and five from the 5th and 6th grades. In other words, all the cities have gradually extended the courses to lower grades according to their own local policy, which leads to a situation of inconsistent implementation nationwide.

Under the Ministry of Education announcement in March 2000 (Ministry of Education of R.O.C., 2000), it became obligatory for primary school 5th Grade (age 11) students to start studying English as a foreign language, and later, the starting grade was lowered to the 3rd Grade (age 9) in 2005 (Ministry of Education of R.O.C., 21/04/2003a). Generally speaking, researchers in Taiwan agree with the primary English policy (He, 2003; Z. Huang, 1990; H. Wang, 1995; cited in Z. Lin, 2004b), but opinions on the best grade to start remain varied (Z. Lin, 2004b). For languages taught as compulsory subjects, the number of lessons per year and week is prescribed in the national curricula. The time allocated depends on students' grade and school policy, ranging from one to two hours per week at primary level, which means that students receive an estimated 18-36 hours of English instruction

in total per semester.

It is common in Taiwan that parents send their children to private English lessons (cram schools). Y. Chang (2003) using questionnaires to 299 parents found that nearly 50% of the parents surveyed had been sending their children to cram schools and more than half of the parents disagreed that extending the primary education to lower graders could stop parents sending their children to such private lessons (Chang, 2003:268). Chang argued this is contrary to the original idea of MOE's policy, which intends to let students learn English at school.

3.1.1 General Guidelines of Grade 1-9 Curriculum of Elementary and Junior High School Education (GGGC) – English language for primary schools

According to the GGGC, English education should develop students' communication ability, native language awareness and a global perspective in order to maximize individuals' potential, promote social progress and enhance national competitiveness (Ministry of Education of R.O.C., 1999; 26/05/2008). Through English learning, learners can have opportunities to experience, understand and respect various cultures. The key points are summarised below (Huang, 2002b; Lin, 2004b; Ministry of Education of R.O.C., 1999).

Like many other countries including those mentioned in section 2.3, the GGGC's English subject curriculum hopes to create a natural and pleasant language learning environment in order to develop learners' positive attitude and basic communicative competence. English classes should be relaxing, vigorous and interactive. The materials and activities should be practical, interesting, varied in theme, and relevant to learners' daily life. Communicative ability should be built through interactive activities and texts at the level of basic and simple conversation with native speakers of English (e.g. greeting), instead of through grammar lessons from the teachers. In order to maintain learners' motivation without adding a burden to their learning, the amount and level of the difficulty of texts used should be carefully chosen and teachers should place learners' needs, interests and abilities first (Huang, 2002b; Lin, 2004b; Ministry of Education of R.O.C., 1999).

The goals of the GGGC are to cultivate learners' English communication proficiency, to develop students' interests and strategies in learning English, and to promote learners' understanding of native and foreign cultures. At the primary stage, the focus should be on listening and speaking skills (Chai, 1999; J. Chen, 1998b),

as much foreign language research suggests that young learners have advantages in pronunciation. Thus the GGGC hopes to utilize this advantage to implement a curriculum emphasizing listening and speaking, in order to build a strong base for communicative competence through a large amount of experience (Shi & Zhu, 1997). Therefore, the first goal overturns the traditional grammar translation method, which has been used since 1970s. The second goal shifts the goal of learning from 'only for examinations' to 'for enjoyment'.

The third goal is an area that the past education system neglected. Z. Huang (1994) points out that culture learning was never seen seriously before and W. Zou (2001) also reported Taiwanese learners are weak at introducing their own culture in English. Therefore, a primary English course should focus on cultural learning and international understanding. Shi and Zhu (1997) suggest that primary English should include culture and festivals in both native and target language culture as well as basic greetings in conversation in order to appreciate and respect different cultures and increase awareness of students' own culture.

The curriculum states the general objectives of the two stages regarding language ability, English learning and cultural awareness, and moreover, lists the specific objectives to achieve these in the three areas above. For instance, the first specific objective for stage one in listening is to be able to audibly recognise the 26 English letters, to learn printed form and recognise the cursive form later at stage two in writing. The first specific object for English learning is to participate in activities and to increase the knowledge of foreign holidays and festivals in cultural awareness. Apart from bottom-up skills, the GGGC provides a 2,000 word list,⁴² which contains 1,200 basic words for primary level. While completing the first stage, learners are expected to be able to recognise by sight 300 words and spell and write 180 words from the wordlist (Ministry of Education of R.O.C., 26/05/2008:8).

Since the stage goals of the curriculum were developed by the Taiwanese Ministry of Education, the language level attempted in the curriculum at primary level is here compared to the European Language Portfolio⁴³ level. The language levels, derived

⁴² The word list has several resources, e.g. the high school textbooks, the word list of Korean primary schools, the word list of primary schools in Shanghai, Japanese high school word list, coursebooks for children on the market in Taiwan, LTTC vocabulary for General English Proficiency Test in Taiwan, entrance examinations for university, Collins COBUILD Dictionary based on The Bank of English Corpus Frequency word list (Ministry of Education of R.O.C., 26/05/2008:8).

⁴³ The European Language Portfolio, developed by the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe, is a personal tool for all European citizens who are learning or have learned a language other than their mother tongue. It was launched on a pan-European level during the European Year of Languages 2001 as a tool to support the development of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism. The main

from the Council of Europe’s Common Framework are given below:

Basic User	(A1 Breakthrough and A2 Waystage),
Independent User	(B1 Threshold and B2 Vantage),
Proficient User	(C1 Effective Operational Proficiency and C2 Mastery)

In more specific terms, the basic user at A1 and A2 can understand and use frequent expressions related to the learner’s immediate environment, such as family and school. The independent user is expected to describe experiences, events and interests etc., and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and future plans (see Haznedar, in progress). A primary EFL learner’s level is similar to the level of the basic user in the European Language portfolio because the last specific objectives of the GGGC regarding listening, speaking, reading and writing are to understand simple children’s stories and plays, to role play using simple dialogue, to predict the plot through pictures, topic or book title and to write simple sentences. The independent user’s level is closer to the stage two objectives, which includes describing events, forming wh-questions, expressing needs and willingness (future plans), and explaining reasons.

The traditional grammar translation method is abandoned in the GGGC, and as Dai (1998) points out, innovative teaching methods are following various newly developed materials applied everywhere; these include direct method, audio-lingual method, Total Physical Response (TPR) and the whole language approach. Z. Lin (2004b) suggests that teachers should utilize different kinds of teaching methods, based on the learners’ needs, the teaching context, and individual differences to increase the effect of instruction. Since the GGGC hopes to develop primary learners’ communicative skills, the communicative approach was proposed by researchers to meet the goal of developing communicative language skills (Chu, 2001; Shi, 22/09/2001; 23/09/2001; 2001; Yeh, 2000). While the Ministry of Education specifies the importance of speaking and listening, the whole language approach that coordinates four language skills was also suggested (Su, 1999; Zheng, 2001). In short, it seems the Taiwanese national curriculum aims to provide primary learners an input-rich nativelike environment for acquisition to take place, as chapter two has

purpose is to provide a record of the linguistic and cultural skills acquired by a learner. In this sense, the portfolio contains a language passport providing an overview of the individuals’ proficiency in different language at a given point in time, a detailed language biography describing the learner’s past and present experiences and guiding the learner in planning and evaluating his/her language learning process, and a dossier offering learners opportunities to select materials to document and illustrate achievements or experiences recorded in the biography or passport (CILT (Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research), 2001).

suggested.

Although the curriculum suggests that evaluation should be conducted through diversified methods, emphasizing both formative and summative evaluations or portfolios, schools still have examinations at the end of each semester. After distributing more than 300 questionnaires to English teachers in central Taiwan, Z. Lin (2004b) concludes the evaluation methods suggested by the GGGC are problematic in practice, along the lines of conclusions of Y. Yang (2000). For instance, such evaluation is more time-consuming (see also Dai & He, 2003) and subjective and some teachers are not willing to change their way of evaluation (Z. Lin, 2004b:40).

3.1.2 Implementation

Although the GGGC tries to give as much information as possible, it is only a general guideline. Schools and teachers must adapt the curriculum to their own contexts. Therefore, in this section, we will look at the implementation in practice regarding the number of sessions offered, training of teachers, teaching materials, teaching methods and assessment.

According to the GGGC, primary learners are required to learn Mandarin, English and one of Taiwan's local dialects, i.e. Southern Fujianese, Hakka, or an aboriginal language. The total of these should account for 20%-30% of lessons (28-31 for grade three), which is 5-6 lessons. This leads to a maximum possible periods for English of 1-2 periods. *Citi Finance*, the leading global financial services company, and the *National Teachers' Association R.O.C.* (hereafter *Citi* and *NTA*) (01/10/2003a) carried out a survey of the current implementation of English Teaching and reported that among the schools which has lowered English lessons to middle and lower grades, 57% of the schools had one English lesson per week, 35% had two lessons, and the rest had more than three to four lessons but regional differences existed. Upper graders usually have more hours than lower and middle graders. In chapter two we looked at the importance of the quantity of input, and note here that one to two hours of instruction is hardly enough to create an immersion or nativelike environment for learners in an EFL context (Z. Lin, 2004b; M. Shi, 2005) to achieve the Taiwanese curriculum goal of increasing learners' basic communicative competence to the specific objectives attempted in the curriculum, e.g. to be able to role play and describe pictures in speaking.

With respect to quality of input, the Ministry of Education had anticipated the problem

of the lack of qualified teachers while passing this primary English policy and thus held an examination in 1999 to recruit people who had high English proficiency, followed by pre-service training programmes to increase the number of qualified teachers. Unfortunately, among the 3,536 people who passed the exam, only 1,476 finished the training and stayed to teach English. In 2003, there were still nearly 1,200 substitute English teachers to teach the upper graders, which means, the lack of qualified teachers remained a serious problem (*Mandarin Daily News*, 28/09/2003). Some local governments also have collaborated with neighboring colleges and universities to set up teacher training programmes for undergraduates or in-service teachers to become English subject teachers. The survey of *Citi* and *NTA* (01/10/2003b) also reported that among the 1,004 primary schools, half of the schools still suffered from a lack of qualified teachers. *Mandarin Daily News* reported on a survey by the Kingcar Education Foundation in 2003 which found that only 37% of primary English teachers had graduated in English. The English proficiency of primary English teachers was still questionable and over 90% of English teachers said they needed more in-service training (Z. Lin, 2004b:65; M. Shi, 2005; *Mandarin Daily News*, 02/08/2003). The same problem was confirmed again in several dissertations (He, 2003; J. Huang, 2002b; Y. Lin, 2003b).⁴⁴ The problem is particularly serious in rural areas because of limited resources and financial support. The lack of instruction hours and qualified teachers means insufficient input in quantity and quality, which can slow down learners' learning progress and damage implementation of the policy.

The MOE thus planned to employ English-speaking native teachers, hoping to lead to educational reform and cultural exchange through communication and discussion on teaching methods and materials among teachers from different countries (Ministry of Education of R.O.C., 21/04/2003b; 25/03/2003). Unfortunately, this action was questioned and criticised for its lack of regulation, neglect of Taiwanese teachers' employment opportunities, fawning on foreign powers, unfair salary compared to that of local teachers and an attempt to confuse learners' awareness and knowledge of their own cultures (National Teachers' Association R.O.C., 2003/10/1). The response of MOE was that the regulations had been set up and the quality of the teachers was strictly examined, in addition to a promise to allocate local unemployed teachers before native English-speaking teachers. It was pointed out that Taiwanese teachers would be the ones in charge of the class and the English-native teachers should only assist (*Mandarin Daily News*, 07/01/2003; 09/01/2003; 16/02/2003). Although the MOE response of the policy seems acceptable, Z. Lin (2004b) and Fu (09/11/2004)

⁴⁴ J. Huang (2002b): 741 teachers through questionnaire survey. He (2003): 44 English teachers in 41 schools through questionnaires and interviews. Y. Lin (2003b): 161 English teachers and 712 5th and 6th graders through questionnaires.

point out some problems in operation. For example, MOE hopes that local authorities can pay for the salary of their native English-speaking teachers from their local budget. Rural areas usually already have budget difficulties; therefore, this will only worsen their finances. Besides, to pay for English-native teachers' salaries might also push out other items in their educational budgets and thus is considered not feasible (*Mandarin Daily News*, 09/03/2003). Observing from the Japanese system of using Foreign Assistant Teachers (JET), it is usually the native speaker teacher who is in charge of the class in cooperative teaching; the non-native teacher is usually assisting only because of language difficulty, which is the exact opposite to the Taiwanese policy (*Mandarin Daily News*, 16/02/2003; Lin, 2002). Z. Y. Zhou (2003) and Z. Lin (2004b) thus suggest that we should start from small-scale experimental projects before any national-scale implementation. Apart from being strict on teacher selection criteria, the MOE should also design non-Taiwanese teachers' pre-and in-service training programmes, which includes: 1. understanding the Chinese language, Taiwanese culture and festivals; 2. understanding the Taiwanese education system, society's needs, and parents' expectations; 3. knowing the common errors for Taiwanese learners, especially in terms of grammar and pronunciation. The curriculum should also detail the content and model of cooperative teaching between Taiwanese and non-Taiwanese teachers (Z. Lin, 2004b).

When it comes to materials, the GGGC allows schools to select their own textbooks, from all of the approved versions, with consideration given to regional features as well as the characteristics and needs of students. If necessary, schools may compile alternative textbooks and teaching materials or select teaching materials other than the approved textbooks. This has resulted in a situation where there is no unitary textbook. Z. Lin (2004b) reported that although most schools, except schools in five cities and counties, used their own regional authority approved books for upper graders. Textbooks for other grades are mostly compiled by the teachers, which adds more work for teachers and even more variation in materials because teachers may have different ideas about what should be taught. At the moment, there are thus four sources of textbooks: MOE approved textbooks, local authority approved textbooks, school compiled textbooks, and teacher compiled textbooks. In addition, there may be more than one version of textbook from each official source. For instance, in 2002, 14 publishers had 15 textbooks for primary English. This wide variety of textbooks is likely to lead to confusion and inconsistency between schools and regions. When learners enter stage two (junior high school), they usually go to different schools, which means a high-school class consists of students from different primary classes and schools. No unitary EFL textbook and different teachers with different training

and proficiency and schools at primary level will increase the difficulty in students' transition.

Innovative teaching methods are now widely adopted. J. Y. Huang (2002b) reports that the most commonly used teaching methods are communicative language teaching (CLT), direct method, audio-lingual method, natural method and Total Physical Response (TPR). Several studies have reported, e.g. Citi and NTA surveys, that most teachers are able to apply different methods regarding different contexts and contents. While the main instruction language is English, Chinese is often used to explain. Only a few teachers used only English (Citi Finance & National Teachers' Association R.O.C., 01/10/2003a; Huang, 2002b; Xie, 2001). Although the GGGC encourages teachers to teach in the target language as much as possible, in practice it is not easy because, apart from the fact that teachers need to have high English proficiency, learners also need to adjust to the methods and have a certain ability to understand instruction (Huang, 2002b; Lin, 2004b). Most teachers focus on listening and speaking, 71% of the teachers only teach phonics, and 27% teach both phonics and the phonetic alphabet. Among the classroom activities, learners respond most to chants and songs, role-plays, stories and situational exercises (Citi Finance & National Teachers' Association R.O.C., 01/10/2003a).

S. Xie (2001), H. Li (2003) and He (2003) all confirmed through questionnaire surveys that primary school evaluations of children's English are now conducted through diversified methods. These different methods and measurement can lead to complexities in comparing levels across schools and regions. Stage two teachers will, again, have problems understanding learners' real levels from learners' transcript marks from primary level.

In summary, since 1996 all local authorities have started their own primary English. Most teachers are MOE trained teachers who passed the examination in 1999, but many schools still are short of teachers and thus employing part-time teachers, substitute teachers, subject teachers shared by several schools or volunteer specialists. On materials, most cities choose MOE approved textbooks, but for lower grades there is high use of teacher or school compiled texts (J. Huang, 2002b; Z. Lin, 2004b; M. Shi, 2005; Y. Xie, 2002).

3.2 Issues and Problems identified in the literature

In the following section, some recent and commonly discussed issues in the literature

on primary EFL in Taiwan are reviewed. Due to the fact that the Ministry of Education constantly revises the curriculum, issues now outdated (e.g. before implementation) are not mentioned.

3.2.1 Limited class hours

The most commonly mentioned issue in the literature is limited instruction time. As mentioned in section 3.1.2, nowadays primary learners learn three languages: Mandarin Chinese, English, and a local dialect, Southern Fujianese, Hakka, or an aboriginal language, along with many other subjects: Health and Physical Education,⁴⁵ Social Studies, Arts and Humanities, Science and Technology, and Mathematics. Only forty to eighty minutes a week can be devoted to English, which is considered insufficient (see also W. Dai, 1999; C. Chen, 1999). If there were no other opportunities for students to receive language input in the week after the class, students would struggle to remember what they had learned and the teacher would have to review all the time and thus progress would be slow (Y. Zhan, 2001b:192). An alternative was, as Genesee (1987) mentioned, that more concentrated teaching over a shorter period of time might compensate learners for less accumulative exposure to an L2 (H. Chang, 2004:99-100). What this indicates is that learners may eventually achieve higher English proficiency if given more intensive English instruction over a limited period. Similarly, if this is applied to Taiwanese primary English learners, we would need more compact programmes. Compared with those offered to early French immersion programmes in Canada, the English instruction hours that have been offered to primary school students in Taiwan are far below the amount of time needed to attain higher English proficiency (see section 2.2 the importance of input), which points to the importance of extra-curriculum input in EFL learning. Since learners have so few sessions in a week, they should look for input themselves in order for input to become intake through multiple exposures and encountering vocabulary in different contexts to understand meanings.

3.2.2 Foreign language environment

As Krashen *et al.* (1979) argue, those who are exposed naturally to an L2 as children generally attain higher L2 proficiency than those starting as adults (see section 2.1.2). That is, beginning to learn English in primary school may not lead to higher English proficiency unless it occurs in a natural English-speaking environment. Thus, even though Taiwanese students begin to be exposed to English at primary level, it does

⁴⁵ This is similar to PSHE (Personal, Social, and Health Education) in the UK.

not mean they will eventually achieve higher English proficiency unless they are provided with an ideal environment. As was previously noted, only two sessions per week are offered to Taiwanese primary learners, in addition to the fact that in most of the schools, English instructors are Taiwanese and not native speakers. Obviously, the current English learning environment in Taiwanese primary schools is far from nativelike⁴⁶ and likely to lack sufficient primary linguistic data to take advantage of children's receptiveness to this sort of input. Hence, creating an input-rich (as opposed to acquisition-poor, p23) environment, in Taiwanese primary schools for the development of students' higher English proficiency is one of the targets that the Taiwanese policy makers should aim to achieve (H. Chang, 2004:100-101).

3.2.3 Expectations of the general public

In the old education system, English was seen as a symbol of an advanced education background because only people with a higher education background possessed the ability to use it. The general public used to emphasize students' academic achievements, especially parents, and believed that a higher education degree was a guarantee to success. After the implementation of the GGGC, which focuses on communicative ability, learners now need to gain not only grammatical competence, but also communicative skills. According to S. J. Chen (2000b), parents now expect their children to possess high proficiency in both communicative and grammatical competence in order to obtain high grades and enter good schools and universities; unfortunately, this expectation is very different from the policy goal, which places minimum attention on grammar at primary level. As a result, a great number of parents complain about the simple class contents and the lack of grammar exercises. In order to help their children to learn more, most parents still send their children to cram schools, which has been a social custom for years (S. J. Chen, 2000b:63). Y. F. Chang (2003) carried out a questionnaire survey in central Taiwan on 299 parents' opinions of the implementation of primary English and found that less than 20% of the parents were satisfied with the effect of the policy and around 60% of the parents disagreed that parents should stop sending the children to private English lessons or cram schools. Y. F. Chang's (2003:267) study also showed that parents wanted their children to do more than keep up with their peers at school, they want their children

⁴⁶ The reason for using 'nativelike environment' here is that a more nativelike environment is likely to contain more opportunities for contacts with the target language, which will contain more primary linguistic data than in a less nativelike environment (cf. acquisition poor environment on page 23). This issue relates to the topic of 'World English' (Brutt-Griffler, 2002; Cheshire, 1991; Crystal, 1995; Kachru, 1997; McArthur, 2003) where the wider context of English might be considered. However, this is not considered in this thesis because there is no Taiwanese English as such, and because primary school children are rarely if ever exposed to English outside of the classroom, much less outside of Taiwan.

to outperform others and have better marks. This indicates that people in Taiwan still consider passing the grammar-based examinations as the ultimate goal in learning English. Furthermore, both S. J. Chen (2000b) and Y. F. Chang (2003) pointed out that some parents also expect their children to become balanced bilinguals or ideal bilinguals through the English education. This is unlikely to happen because if it is only Chinese that is used in life for communication, it is very difficult to increase or maintain the child's English ability, especially for speaking and listening, since they do not use both languages to express themselves at the same time (Fishman, 1971:560).

Whether the goal is to pass the examination or to learn English well, there is a gap between the expectation of the general public and the goal of the policy. Therefore, S. J. Chen (2000b:64) suggests that policy makers see the differences and discuss or work collaboratively with professionals, parents and teachers in order to minimize differences and to reach an agreement, or complaints from the public will become a force of resistance and will influence the implementation of the policy.

3.2.4 Myth of early advantages

It is generally believed by the public that 'the earlier, the better' (see section 2.1.2). Although the Taiwanese government started English education from upper grades in primary schools as researchers suggested, many people (e.g. the parents in Y. F. Chang's study) still believe that English education should start even earlier, e.g., from the first year of primary school. In Y. F. Chang's (2003:279) study, most of the parents still support an earlier start than the fifth grade. For instance, over 90% of the parents thought EFL should start before the 5th grade (age 11), nearly half of the parents in Taichung area (the third largest city of Taiwan and the locus of the current study) suggested starting from kindergarten, and nearly 30% of the parents opted for first grade. In 2005, the government lowered the implementation year to the third grade, probably due to pressure from society.

However, in the literature (Genesee, 1987; Krashen *et al.*, 1979; Snow & Hoefnagel-Höhle, 1978; Swain, 1981b; Swain & Lapkin, 1989), it has been found that younger L2 learners are not always better and the older ones may be better in acquiring certain L2 skills, particularly more rapidly. Thus, as these researchers have suggested, Taiwanese English education policy makers should no longer act upon the assumption that younger learners are better. Rather, they should take into account some other important factors such as time, environment and strategies that might also

influence the effectiveness of English teaching (Chang, 2004:99).

3.2.5 Mixed-level classes

Mixed-level classes is a very common issue in teachers' opinions (Ministry of Education of R.O.C., 21/11/2002; S. Yang, 2002). The master's dissertations of J. Huang (2002b), Y. Xie (2002), Y. Lin (2003b) and H. Li (2003)⁴⁷ looked into different areas of Taiwan and their results indicated that at least eleven among 25 cities and counties have this problem. In Taiwan, the average class size is 30. The rationale of obligatory education means teachers must offer fair opportunities to all learners and thus mixed-ability learners are placed in the same class. When there is a large class of mixed-level students, it is difficult for teachers to take care of each student all of the time (Huang, 2002b:81). As a result, take English lessons for an example, advanced-level learners might feel bored in the classroom because they have learned the lesson somewhere else (e.g. at cram schools) before, medium-level students might feel depressed comparing themselves to the advanced students, and the lower-level students might feel discouraged and then give up. In addition, Burstall (1977) shows that learners who are given early exposure to a L2 and are then integrated into classes containing learners without such experience (similar to a mix-level class) do not maintain a clear advantage for more than a relatively short period over learners who begin to learn the language later. Therefore, if the situation of mixed levels is not improved, the progress of learners might be slower than educators had expected before implementation.

Even worse, a phenomenon was recently observed by researchers and the Ministry of Education in the examination results of junior high students' English performance. It is termed 'double-peak phenomenon' (Mandarin Daily News, 25/09/2003) and refers to the fact that most students are either very good or very bad at English, only a small number of learners are in the middle (*Mandarin Daily News*, 02/08/2003; 25/09/2003; 29/12/2002).

3.2.6 Education differences in urban and rural areas

S. Chang (2005) investigated the conditions and resources of English learning of primary learners in urban, rural and remote areas. She interviewed 48 students and six

⁴⁷ All these studies used questionnaire surveys but differed in the number and types of informants: J. Huang (2002b) had 741 teachers, Y. Xie (2002) had 131 teachers and 1,022 students, Y. Lin (2003b) had 161 teachers and 712 grade 5 and 6 students, and H. Li (2003) had 39 English teachers, 665 students, 137 parents and 81 school administrators.

English teachers, and then carried out a questionnaire survey to investigate parents' opinions (n=145) at six schools; two in urban areas, two in rural and two in remote areas. She reported that: (i.) The students in urban areas performed best in oral, listening and writing expressions. (ii.) The students in urban areas were not enthusiastic with learning if the lesson was not interesting. The students in rural areas were more willing to learn English in the class. The students in remote area showed less willingness to learn English. (iii.) In remote areas, there were few teacher-student interactions in the classroom. (iv.) The urban schools had more outside-school learning resources than both rural and remote schools. (v.) Parents of students in urban areas were more concerned with their children's learning than those of students in both rural and remote areas.

3.2.7 Lack of equipment

Regarding equipment, after J. Huang's (2002b:82) study of 741 English teachers and Z. Lin's (2004b:116) study of 327 English teachers both through questionnaires, they discovered eleven counties and cities expressed the problem of insufficient teaching equipment and lack of language labs. 42% of the schools did not have an English subject classroom, and English teachers in these two studies all expressed that the lack of English classrooms influenced their teaching.

In fact, most primary learners (81.2%) have also been learning English at private language centers (cram schools) (Chai, 2001). Even though the schools teach English, parents still send their children to private language centers because they want their children to outperform others (see section 3.2.3). This has become the educational culture in Taiwan, although the original idea of MOE to start this policy was to stop parents from sending their children to cram schools (see section 3.1). Chai (2001) investigated the current status of upper grade children's after-school English learning. Among the 1,195 learners from 18 schools at four counties in central Taiwan, more than four-fifths of upper grade children had the experience of learning English at cram schools. Most children learned English at children's English cram schools twice a week, two hours at a time, mainly through textbooks chosen by the cram schools. These cram school books were usually designed by publishers for young language learners and they could be different from the school textbooks. The class size of cram schools for young learners is around 10-15. However, the methods of teaching and teachers' proficiency are decided by cram schools; therefore, the quality of teaching varies. 51.9% of these learners reported that they daily reviewed English for 30 minutes at home, whereas a rather high percentage (31.6%) reported they never

reviewed at home. When asked how they reviewed English after class, 48% reported they reviewed English at cram schools, 16% reported that their parents helped them, 40% said they used tapes or videos, 8% used interactive CD-ROMs, 6% of the students chose to listen to broadcasts and 47% read textbooks by themselves. In the study, tapes, videos, CD-ROMs, magazines, storybooks, dictionaries were all used by students, but 8% of students used no support material. The study revealed that students' after-class input was confined to cram schools, with short revisions at home. It also showed that resources in English, e.g. English broadcasts, books and magazines, TV, etc., are actually easily accessible in Taiwan. Although the above suggests that many (80%) children have more than two hours of English contact (some children even have six hours), we cannot be sure if this is sufficient because, as we have discussed in chapter two, the type and quality of input which would be influenced by the teacher and teaching method could also play an important role in the achievement.

3.2.8 Classroom language

The GGC encourages teachers to use English as much as possible in the classroom; therefore, many teachers object to the use of the learners' L1 (Chinese), which actually is one of the opponents' arguments for early L2 instruction. These opponents fear that this will damage learners' L1 development (M. Lin, 2000). Proponents of English only classrooms hope to create an 'immersion education' environment and insist on using English as their instruction language to provide more comprehensible input for acquisition (Krashen, 1982; 1985). Apart from the very important factor of the teacher's English proficiency, some other issues arise. Mahadeo (2003) observed a non-native teacher who had himself not mastered the use of English, who tried to focus on form (i.e. grammar) with the purpose of giving some practice in the Present Perfect. His use of the Present Perfect ('*have eaten*') was inappropriate, and his focus turned out to be on the use of the auxiliary ('*have*') rather than tense or aspect. From a lexical point of view, his request to students not to 'take' their books was a direct translation from French *prendre*. Since the lessons were taught (though badly according to Mahadeo) in the TL, it should be pointed out that this is still comprehensible input for acquisition, although it is not the study of grammar that is responsible for the students' progress, but the medium (Krashen, 1982:120). In content-based language teaching, which is using the target language to teach a school subject, in order to convey subject matter, students are often exposed to a special English 'interlanguage' to bridge the gap between the subject's language requirements and the students' language competence. Unfortunately, when students are exposed to English interlanguage input more often than native-speaker English, forms that are

incorrect in Standard English become fossilized for students and impede development toward higher proficiency. Mahadeo (2003:236) concluded that using this type of English as a medium of instruction is not necessarily an advantage in acquiring English.

As a matter of fact, it seems Taiwanese learners learn English in what Tickoo (1993) called an 'acquisition poor environment': one where the teacher is not fully proficient in the language, where the schools and the classrooms are under-equipped, and where there is no real communicative use of the language in the community. Ahai and Faraclas (1993) argue that learners, in acquisition poor environments, do not have access to an environment where they can meet people who can give them exposure to the target language in daily life, and as a result are deprived of the necessary input for developing mastery of the language. As might be expected in an acquisition poor environment, there are largely differential levels of proficiency, whereby some English language learners are more successful than others. In Mahadeo's study (2003), the children who receive more input because of their elite family background (e.g. highly educated parents who can speak English) outperform the others.

In summary, although Taiwanese primary learners are learning English at school now, many problems exist. It is still too early to decide if the policy will succeed or fail; however, some factors mentioned earlier would definitely have a negative influence, for instance, the lack of instruction hours and teacher's level of English in schools. These two problems directly affect the quality and quantity of the students' target language input. If the schools cannot devote more hours on English, the teachers need to provide better input in the limited time they have but as yet many of the teachers cannot. If schools provide neither good quantity nor quality of input, then the progress in learners' language is minimized.

3.3 The baseline survey

After thorough consideration of the background to the Taiwanese government's implementation of primary English, I carried out a relatively extensive survey to establish the current situation of English learning and teaching in Taiwan. This enabled me to arrive at a set of more specific questions to pursue and give me an indication of how I would be able to go about doing so. Crucially, I wanted to make sure that my study would address real problems, and only by surveying a sample of individuals did I feel confident that my study would do so.

In May 2004, three years after the national implementation of primary English policy from the fifth grade onwards, I carried out a survey to compile empirical data by interviewing teachers and students on their attitudes towards a range of issues. Primary-level teachers and students were interviewed, but secondary participants were also interviewed because they had received English instruction when they were at primary level. The tertiary level participants were as well included because I wanted to know how those who hadn't started at primary level felt about the new policy.

3.3.1 Methodology

This survey was conducted in the mode of descriptive research involving the following standardised procedures: (a) decide on the question; (b) select the population; (c) determine methods for data collection; (d) collect the data; (e) organise and analyse the data (Seliger & Shohamy, 2003).

In order to elicit views about the primary English policy, I carried out a group interview similar to both a semi-structured interview and a focus group discussion approach (McLafferty, 2004; Vaughn, Schumm & Sinagub, 1996) to obtain detailed data for a controlled follow-up study (Vaughn *et al.*, 1996). The former consists of specific and defined questions determined beforehand, allowing some elaboration in the questions and answers. I used an interview schedule/outline listing the questions to be asked/topics to be discussed (Seliger & Shohamy, 2003:167). A focus group is another structured process used to obtain detailed information about a particular topic which is typically composed of six to ten participants brought together to discuss a clearly-defined topic. A facilitator keeps the discussion on track by asking open-ended questions to stimulate discussion. The interview questions were based on the review of the literature on the Taiwanese primary English policy in the previous chapter.

3.3.1.1 Participants

Six groups from primary, secondary and tertiary levels were interviewed (Table 3.1) from urban Taiwan (where the main study would take place) in the northern and central parts of the country. Interviews took place either at school or the interviewer's house.

Table 3.1 Participants in the baseline study 2004

level	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Total
Students	5 (age 11-12)	5 (age 13-15)	4 (age 17-20)	14
Teachers/Lecturers	9	6	3	18

3.3.1.2 Instrument/Materials

Instruments included the interview outline (Appendix 1) and a questionnaire (Appendix 2). The former consisted of 31 questions on (1) teaching; (2) English outside the classroom; (3) attitudes and motivation and (4) opinions about primary English education (Appendix 1). An open-ended format encouraged interviewees to elaborate on their views and allowed me to adjust questions for different participants. In order to detect patterns, questions were turned into a set of 62 closed questions using a Likert 5-scale format (1: strongly disagree, 5: strong agree) after each interview (Appendix 2).

3.3.1.3 Procedure

An hour-long focus group in Chinese was carried out at home or in the school office with each group (with consent from participants or parents of children; participants were told that anonymity would be guaranteed). I asked each question to each participant first and then when questions on one issue were finished, group discussion was directed to elicit more information. At the end of each interview, personal information on length of teaching/learning, gender, age, education background, qualification (for teachers), positions and contacts was obtained. Interviews were either audio- or video-recorded. Rather than full transcription,⁴⁸ data were then transformed into the format described above.⁴⁹

3.3.2 Data Analysis

The data obtained from questionnaires were analysed using SPSS for Windows. First data were presented as descriptive statistics including frequencies, means and standard

⁴⁸ The reason why a full transcription was not carried out was due to the base-line nature of the survey, i.e. its role in determining my set of more specific research questions.

⁴⁹ For example, Q4 in the interview list (see Appendix 1) asks about classroom interaction. In the interview, the researcher breaks this question into two parts. First, the researcher asked the participants, in turn, to describe a typical class they have. Then, the second part of the question about the teachers' responses to an unanswered question was asked. The interviewees were again asked to describe their teachers' responses. During transcription, the researcher can then give a value to Q 9 and Q10 of the questionnaire (Appendix 2) for the first part. Then the same procedure was performed for the second part of the question on teachers' response to students' incorrect answers, in order to give a value to Q11.

deviation and then tested by T-Test, where opinions of all teachers and students were compared. Here I suspected that there often exists a gap between the two parties in terms of their understanding of the rationale behind what occurs in the classroom.

3.3.3 Results

Each of the four subtopics mentioned above is individually presented with a summary table at the end; survey statistics are provided in Appendix 3.

Subtopic 1 English teaching

More than 60% did not think teachers possessed good knowledge about English teaching methods or the ability to use knowledge in teaching; there was a significant difference between the students and the teachers. Teachers perceived themselves more highly in terms of their own ability than the students ($t = 2.238, p < .05$). 55% agreed that English teachers in Taiwan must still improve in terms of teaching methods, and the teachers agreed on this significantly more than the students ($t = 2.091, p < .05$). Half agreed teachers should use only English in classrooms and nearly half did not think using only English in class would cause problems in teaching or learning. Further examination revealed a significant difference between students' and teachers' opinions ($t = -4.646, p = .000$); teachers tended to think that it would increase teaching or learning difficulties more often than students. 65% did not think students were active in class and 56.3% did not think there was much student-teacher interaction. T-test showed a significant difference between teachers and students ($t = 3.168, p < .005$). They disagreed on level of activity, but students scored significantly lower than the teachers (student: 1.64, teacher: 2.78). Table 3.2 summarises some of the major results (See Appendix 3 for detailed results). Although students thought that they were active (Table 3.3), they are in fact passive according to responses regarding participation, as shown below. The 16th questionnaire question in the second section (Q: Do learners have active motivation?) showed 75% thought learners' motivation was active by strongly agreeing/agreeing with the statement. Nonetheless, the 1st question in the attitude and motivation section (Q: Are Taiwanese learners active in attitude?) and the 9th (Do students actively participate and practice in English class?) in the teaching section showed that 65% did not think students were active in class; differences between teachers and students were significant ($t(30) = 3.168, p < .05$). From the table, we can see that teachers and the students disagreed on active-ness, but students' scores were significantly lower than the teachers' (mean scores of teacher group: 2.78; student group: 1.64). Furthermore, 65% did not think Taiwanese students had active motivation and 85% thought students would not try to use English to ask questions in

class.

Table 3.2 Summary of baseline survey results for ‘Teaching’

Participants’ General Opinions (Question No. on the Questionnaire††)	Sig.	</>†
Teaching		
Teachers don’t have good knowledge in English and teaching. (I.1-2)	*	T>S
Teachers need to improve their teaching. (I.3)	*	T>S
Teachers should use English only in classrooms. (I.7-8)	n.s	n.s
It’s difficult to have English-only class. (I.6)	*	S>T
Students are not active. (I.9)	*	T>S
There is not much interaction between teacher and students. (I.10)	n.s	n.s
Taiwanese learners are passive. (II.16, III.1, III.5)	n.s	n.s

†: This column is used to show the relation (> or <) between the means of teachers’ and students’ opinions.

n.s.: not statistically significant

††: ‘I’ refers to the first section on the questionnaire, and the following number refers to the number of question in the questionnaire in that section.

Table 3.3 Descriptive statistics of activeness

Q: Do learners have active motivation?			Q: Are Taiwanese learners active in attitude		Q: Do students actively participate and practice in your English class?		Q: Do students try to use English to ask questions in class?	
Value	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1	2	6.3	2	6.3	9	28.1	6	18.8
2	4	12.5	19	59.4	12	37.5	21	65.6
3	2	6.3	6	18.8	5	15.6	4	12.5
4	21	65.6	5	15.6	5	15.6	0	0.0
5	3	9.4	0	0.0	1	3.1	1	3.1
Total	32	100.0	32	100.0	32	100.0	32	100.0

Value: 1: strongly disagree, 2: disagree, 3: no comment, 4: agree, 5: strongly agree

Subtopic 2 Attitude and motivation

On attitude and motivation, 93.8% thought English teachers had an active teaching attitude. 68% thought this would influence students’ learning attitude; moreover, more than half (56%) agreed this would be positive. T-test results showed that teachers’ opinion was significantly different from students’ for ‘Does the very active attitude of the teacher have a positive influence in the students’ attitude?’ and teachers seemed to agree on this positive influence more than students. One reason might be that sometimes an aggressively or ambitiously active teacher ignores students’ needs and causes tension in class, decreasing student motivation. A significant difference also existed in question 14 under this topic: ‘Is the teacher in a good mood in class while teaching?’ (t = 4.245, p<.05), and it showed a much higher mean for the teacher group (teacher: 4.06, student: 2.64). This may indicate that teachers thought they had already done their best to be pleasant, but students did not agree. Although subjective, this

impacts on students’ learning attitude and motivation. The same percentage of participants (46.9%) either agreed or disagreed that students could always find more effective learning methods/strategies on their own when they had problems. Further examination revealed that teachers tended to think students could not adjust their ways of learning on their own more than students did ($t = -2.655, p < .05$). Half thought teachers helped students’ learning by finding better learning methods for them. However, teachers’ opinion was significantly different from students’, where students tended to believe that their teachers did not help them ($t = 4.06, p = .000$). 53.2% were satisfied with their own or if teachers their students’ English proficiency and a slightly higher percentage agreed that students now possess the ability to have a conversation with foreigners. The difference between the two groups reached a statistically significant level ($t = -2.827, p < .01$) and suggested that the students have higher confidence in themselves (mean = 3.83) or their classmates than the teachers’ in their students (mean = 3.00).

Table 3.4 Summary of baseline survey result for ‘Attitude/Motivation’

Participants’ General Opinions (Question No. on the Questionnaire)	Sig.	</>†
Attitude/Motivation		
Taiwanese English teachers were active, although the students were passive. (III.2)	n.s	n.s
Teachers’ attitude would influence the learners’ learning attitude. (III.3)	n.s	n.s
Teacher with very active attitude would have positive influence on the learners’ attitude. (III.4)	n.s	n.s
Teachers often encourage students and generally are in good mood in class. (III.14-15)	n.s	n.s
Students can always find more effective learning methods/strategies on their own when facing obstacles. (III.16)	*	S>T
Teachers always help students find more effective learning methods/strategies when students have problems in learning. (III.17)	*	T>S
Participants are generally happy with their own or their students’ English proficiency, and think that the students now should possess the ability to talk to foreigners. (III.7-8)	*	S>T
The learning environment in Taiwan might not develop an active learning attitude or help the learners to achieve better learning outcome. (III.11-12)	n.s	n.s
Many participants believed that their learning attitude was very much influenced by their learning experience. (III.18)	n.s	n.s

When participants were asked if the learning environment in Taiwan develops an active learning attitude or helps them to achieve better learning outcomes, they were pessimistic, with more than half of the participants choosing (strongly) disagree, but the difference between the supporters and opponents was not large. About four-fifths of the participants believed that their learning attitudes were very much influenced by their learning experience. In interviews, one very important point that was mentioned was that some students’ English learning experiences were influenced by failure in

other subjects which transferred to loss of overall confidence. One teacher pointed out how important it is for teachers to tell their students that learning a new language is a new start that with courage can build confidence.

Subtopic 3 Opinions on Primary English education

Nearly 60% agreed that increasing hours of English at school would not have a great effect on students’ English proficiency. In interviews, participants were asked how many hours of English there should a week, the students’ answers ranged from forty minutes to three hours, whereas teachers agreed on short daily lessons. Many teachers also said that current class time (forty to eighty minutes per week) was definitely not enough because most students did not review often enough and forgot what they had learned at the next lesson. In interviews with the teachers, they all agreed that parents should be more involved in their children’s learning, pointing out that most did not know what their children were learning at school. However, the students all said that parents supported them by checking exam scores and sending them to cram schools for extra-curricular help.

Table 3.5 Summary of baseline survey results for ‘Primary English Education’

Participants’ General Opinions (Question No. on the Questionnaire)	Sig.	</>†
Education Policy		
Increasing the hours of English class at school would not have a great effect on the students’ English proficiency. (IV.7)	n.s	n.s
Parents play an important role in their children’s education. (Interview notes)	††	
Teachers pointed out parents were the people who not only spent the longest time with the students, but also could control and influence the students most. (Interview notes)		

††: The results from interview notes and open-ended questions cannot be examined by t-test for significant difference.

As discussed in chapter two and earlier in this chapter, exposure to input is essential in language acquisition and amount needs to be seriously considered; therefore, it was of paramount importance to get an idea about the input available to primary school English learners in Taiwan. This information was obtained in various ways during the baseline survey phase of the present thesis. Thus students and teachers were not only asked about their experiences and attitudes and about teacher quality and proficiency but also about input sources inside and outside school

Subtopic 4 English outside of the classroom

Section 2.4.1 highlights the importance of and potential for extra-curricular exposure to input. Questions grouped under this topic sought directly to determine the potential for providing more input to primary-level children and thus bear directly on the

treatment decided on for the present study. None of the participants disagreed that increasing the amount of extra-classroom input could help English learning. Only around 25% said they would be unwilling to adjust their teaching or learning to increase extra-curricular input. Further examination showed a significant difference between teachers and students ($t = 2.549$, $p < .016$); teachers (mean: 3.78) seemed to think they would adjust their methods more than the students did (mean: 2.86). More than 60% of the participants agreed that they were unlikely to learn English well if they only learn it in class, although some teachers pointed out that only certain schools with a lot of financial support and some cram schools could afford to provide a better language environment.⁵⁰

All participants except one believed and agreed that having more contact with English in every day life would be helpful to their English learning, however, most did not think that students would notice input outside the classroom or try to apply what they learned in class. In contrast, only 15% of the participants thought they could not make use of the English they learned at school after class. The results of the T-test showed that significant differences existed between teachers and students in the following two questions: 'Some countries are more successful in their English education. Is it because they have more contacts and so the communication pressure exists?' and 'Some countries are more successful in their English education. Is it because their people are receiving more input (e.g. from TV)?' and generally the teachers agreed with this more than the students. This difference may be due to the fact that students, especially younger ones, are less aware of other countries in terms of language contact and did not realize that level of English in Taiwanese does not compare favorably with other countries. Teachers mentioned in the interviews that it would be difficult to create an input-rich environment for English because of its geographical isolation and due to regional differences in resources. Nearly all also thought Taiwan differs from other countries in terms of language learning environment; the difference between teachers and students was significant with teachers agreeing more on this than students. Again, nearly all agreed that the learning environment in Taiwan still needs great improvement in terms of increasing the input outside of the classroom.

43% participants agreed or strongly agreed that students could learn most effectively when learning takes place outside the classroom, which implies readiness to consider extra-curricular exposure. In fact, when interviewees were asked about how the extra-classroom input could be increased, they strongly agreed with all three options:

⁵⁰ Some cram schools provide after-class activities such as excursions with English-native teachers or review lessons through telephone contacts with learners.

adjustment of teachers' methods, support from parents, and change of education policy, with 75%, 81.3%, and 68.8% respectively. The high percentage for parental support reflected teachers' opinions from the interviews. However, they noted that parents do not, for example, allow their children to watch TV (in English) to ensure they concentrate on studying. When students relax, their focus is on entertainment and they stick with their native Chinese. Teachers pointed to parents as the ones who not only spent the most time with their children, the students, but they have the most control and influence. In this respect, parents should have a good understanding primary English policy. Some teachers even fondly recalled how their interest in and love of English started when they listened to English songs or read storybooks with their family as children.

Although more than half (53.1%) said they had not had teachers who would direct students to getting after-class input in English in to their homework (Table 3.6), only 40% confirmed they had had such an experience. In interviews, it was found that the after-class 'input' was mostly assignments or competitions set by teachers for more practice of classroom lessons. Teachers also thought there was more extra-classroom input than students ($t = 3.022, p < .01$). Up to 96.9% of the teachers and students agreed that it was necessary for teachers to bring authentic materials into class which implies that all expect more than textbook contents and examinations.

3.3.4 Baseline survey findings and implications for the main study

Most students and teachers revealed they did not think Taiwanese teachers possessed good teaching skills, good English knowledge or that the language of the classroom was English. This points to learners only gaining limited proficiency in English during school. The current primary English policy emphasises speaking and listening and the students did indeed demonstrate openness towards an English-only method, with 34.4% disagreeing with such an idea.⁵¹ Students could seek out other resources to improve their English, yet because Taiwanese students seem to be passive, one needs to consider how to boost their interest in learning English to lead to more autonomy.⁵²

This is an important finding in the context of contemporary language-teaching methodologies, which make the assumption (either overtly or covertly) that taking an

⁵¹ Problems can arise, however: if the teacher uses English only this may include only those students with high proficiency, leaving less able students behind and resulting in frustration; teaching hours are so limited that it is more efficient to explain things in Chinese.

⁵² Studies on learner autonomy over the years include Benson (2001), Dickinson (1995), Ehrman and Dörnyei (1998) and Ushioda (1996; 1998).

Table 3.6 Summary of baseline survey results for 'English outside of the Classroom'

Participants' General Opinions (Question No. on the Questionnaire)	Sig.	</>†
English outside of classroom		
Increasing the amount of extra-classroom input could help English learning. (I.12)	n.s	n.s
Teachers are willing to adjust their teaching to provide learners more extra-class input. (I.13-14)	n.s	n.s
More contact with English in life is helpful to English learning. (II.2)	n.s	n.s
Taiwan is different from other countries in creating a learner-friendly environment. (II.1)	*	T>S
Learning environment in Taiwan needs a great improvement in terms of extra-classroom input. (II.3)	n.s	n.s
Extra-classroom input could be increased through the adjustment of teaching method, support from parents and change of education policy, with parents' support being the highest. (II.4-6)	n.s	n.s
Learners cannot learn English well if the learning is confined to English class. (II.14)	n.s	n.s
Students would not notice the extra-classroom input or try to make use of what they learn in class. (II.13)	n.s	n.s
The participants agreed that learners could learn most when the learning took place outside the classroom. (II.15)	n.s	n.s
Half of the participants reported no experience with extra-classroom input, apart from homework or exercises for class contests. (II.17)	*	T>S
Teachers need to bring authentic materials into the class. (II.18)	n.s	n.s
Learners can make use of what they learned after class. (II.19)	n.s	n.s
Some countries are more successful in their English education because they have more contact, communication pressure and more input. (II.20-21)	*	T>S

active, independent attitude to learning – that is, becoming an autonomous learner – is beneficial to learning (Dörnyei, 2001:131). This assumption is partly rooted in the principles of humanistic psychology, namely that 'the only kind of learning which significantly affects behaviour is self-discovered, self-appropriated learning' (Rogers, 1961:276), and partly in education psychology, which has emphasized the importance of learning strategies and self-regulation (Dickinson, 1995). The principles of fostering learner autonomy include allowing learners real choices, teachers sharing responsibility with learners for organising their learning process and giving them positions of genuine authority, and encouraging learner contributions, and project work (Dörnyei, 2001).

A majority of interviewees thought teachers' attitude positively influences students' learning attitude and that attitudes were in turn influenced by learning experiences. Another result we see from the above which related to the increase of the learning attitude was confidence in students' English level, although the causal relationship was not clear. Views were divided as to whether students could find their own

effective learning (see paragraph above on autonomy). However, students tended to think that their teachers did not provide support. More scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978; Wood *et al.*, 1976) at appropriate times may be required facilitate improvement here.

Participants had different opinions of the amount of time that should be spent on English. Many teachers said that the current forty to eighty minutes per week was insufficient (and that most students failed to review enough at home to make class sessions maximally useful). This is in accordance with Zhan's (2001b:192) study of problems in Taiwanese primary English education and with Dai (1998:235), who reported that most schools only provided two to three 40-minute sessions; here some suggested an ideal timetable would be 20-40 minutes every day. However, nearly three-fifths of all participants agreed that increasing time spent on English in school would not have a great effect on proficiency. Here participants seem to realize that teaching methods and family also play an important role, and all teachers in the survey noted the importance of involving parents in their children's education. No one disagreed that increasing the amount of extra-classroom input could help English learning, and nearly all agreed that the learning environment in Taiwan needs improvement in terms of extra-curricular target language exposure. More than half of the students agreed that they were unlikely to learn English well if they only learned it in class, but they did not think they would automatically take notice of input outside the classroom. If students in Taiwan are passive learners (resulting from along history of exam-driven education, where students take in lessons without thinking actively and critically; see above), they are also extrinsically and instrumentally motivated (Gardner & Lambert, 1972, see section 2.5.3). If input can be increased for Taiwanese primary school children, their interest in English *per se* can be encouraged for them to become active learners. That the participants expressed a desire to use authentic materials augured well for implementation of family reading to provide extra-classroom input. When the interviewees were asked about how extra-curricular input could be increased, parental involvement had the highest score. We saw from the survey results that Taiwanese parents seem to care about their children's exam results and are, in general, concerned with their children's education. Finally, because they know their children best, they can be an important, positive influence on their children's learning experiences.

From reviewing the literature (Chapter 2, section 2.1.4) and these base-line survey results, it was clear that English learning in Taiwan was mostly confined to classrooms (at main or cram schools). While we cannot deny the importance of language learning in the classroom, we also want to pursue and stress the role of learning outside the

classroom (e.g. Lightbown, 1991, see chapter two, section 2.2.2). The survey results show participants' desire for a better learning environment to help language learning. To my knowledge, however, little detailed relevant research had been carried out in Taiwan on what might be done to improve students' environment. As mentioned in Chapter 2, section 2.2.2, an environment which provides abundant input is essential for language learning/acquisition to take place. 'Learning English occurs over time, but the positive effects of ESL instruction are complemented by other real life experience' (Weslander & Stephany, 1983:479). This statement stresses the importance of input outside of the classroom (see section 2.4).

The base-line survey results also show learners are willing to learn outside of classroom if the input attracts them. The junior high school group said in the interview that it was only students who could decide whether to learn or not and that they should take full responsibility for their learning by being actively involved in learning beyond the classroom; see above on learner autonomy. We know that learning English is an ongoing process where students should self-direct their learning by using all the skills and resources available, even if the teacher is not around to provide input. If Krashen (1982) is right about the 'affective filter' (see Krashen's five hypotheses, Chapter 2, section 2.2.2.3), extra-classroom input which is provided in an environment of rich input but where anxiety level is low would be ideal. However, as discussed in section 3.3.3 on attitude and motivation, Taiwanese learners are not as active as they themselves think. So, the question is how to raise students' intrinsic motivation to result in greater autonomy. If primary students' experiences learning English are pleasant, and if they perform well, this can plant the seeds for more active learning (see motivation, Chapter 2, section 2.5.3). We can now consider how this might be accomplished. One possibility considered was use of multimedia. This was rejected because it would not have been affordable for all students in a typical Taiwanese primary school. The second option considered and settled upon was storybooks, along the lines of Krashen's 'Free Voluntary Reading' and the 'extensive reading approach' (Chapter 2, section 2.5), which aims at low pressure, high enjoyment and interest and is flexible in application time. English storybooks are already often used in language learning and seen as a source of quality input; they also are much more readily available and accessible than multimedia resources (see section 2.5.2).

We have confirmed what was suspected: learners need more interesting extra-curricular input, and as noted earlier, while the interviewees agreed that the extra-classroom input could be increased all via adjustment of teachers' methods, support from parents and change of policy, it was parental support that had the highest

percentage (81.3%); this view was also reflected by teachers' opinions during interviews. In Chapter 2, section 2.5.3, we reviewed the role of family literacy in children's learning and above we covered students' and teachers' views on the high level of parental involvement in children's education in Taiwan. It was therefore decided that for the main study, children would read at home and that parents would be involved to scaffold their children's learning on a project consisting of the Extensive Reading approach and Family Literacy. In the next section, we will look at the details of the pilot study and the main studies accordingly, but first, the background to these is presented.

3.4 What input can be provided through such a programme?

From the above review here and in Chapter 2, I would like to re-state the rationale of extra-curricular family extensive reading from various viewpoints presented in second language acquisition literature.

First, on input, it is generally suggested the more the better. To be able to acquire a language, one needs to be exposed to it, to be constantly receiving input. At school, teachers try to provide comprehensible input; however, there is not much they can do after school. EFL learners, i.e. learners in Taiwan, learn their target language in the classroom or in cram schools and lack input outside of instructed contexts and thus there is much scope for extra-curricular input. Research has suggested that an early start does not guarantee success, and it is the amount of exposure that matters. Being exposed to more primary language data (PLD) can only benefit learners.

However, extra-curricular input needs to be able to attract the learners' attention and be easily accessible. Not everyone can afford multimedia equipment and thus books are probably the most convenient resource. This is why English storybooks have been used in ELT for years with empirical support for their value. English storybooks contain a lot of real language input or PLD, which learners can not get from language-based textbooks. Unlike speech, written language can be read as many times as the reader wants or needs to.

Researchers such as Krashen have argued that comprehensible input is the resource of acquisition, whereas others suggest it is the incomprehensible input that can change a learner's interlanguage grammar (White, 1987a). No matter which is relevant at a given point, the reader can certainly benefit from comprehensible input to improve reading fluency. Incomprehensible input can lead to a breakdown in reading, be

ignored or be stored as a formulaic chunk (Myles, 2004) through repetition of language as a base for expansion later, or can even stimulate change in the reader's linguistic competence. It is important to realise that there is a great potential for frustration, demotivation and having the learner feel unable to succeed. Therefore, to what extent written input is incomprehensible is important. When it comes to vocabulary, it is generally suggested that only 5-10% of the vocabulary can be unfamiliar to the reader in order to avoid overloading them with difficult words (e.g. Day & Bamford, 1998).

Reading outside of school needs to be carried out in a less stressful way in order to be motivating and sustainable (Day & Bamford, 1998; Krashen, 1993; 2004b). In an extensive reading approach, learners read a lot of easy material in the new language. They choose their own reading material, read it independently for general/overall meaning, and they read for information and enjoyment. They are encouraged to stop reading if a particular book is not interesting or too difficult. They are also encouraged to expand their reading comfort zone. What is true for fluent readers – that slowing down and paying conscious attention to recognizing words interferes with the construction of meaning – is even more true for beginner readers. Extensive reading can – perhaps must – play an important role in developing the components upon which fluent second language reading depends: a large sight vocabulary; a wide general vocabulary; and knowledge of the target language, the world, and text types (Day & Bamford, 1998). This approach has received a lot of empirical support (see Chapter 2, section 2.5.1.4, on successful ER programmes), showing positive results in reading, writing, vocabulary, positive affect, and general proficiency. From section 3.1.1, we know that the Taiwanese GGGC adopts as one method the whole language, and the extensive reading approach fits into the national curriculum well. Unfortunately, owing to the methodological differences in extensive reading studies, there are no consistent results so far.

Apart from interesting materials, family support can be an enhancement to such a project because the literature (e.g. Bus & Van Ijzendoorn, 1988; Chang & Lin, 2006; Werner, 2000) has suggested that home-based reading usually correlates with young learners' language achievement (see section 2.5.3). How parents interact with their children in reading could also be a factor. Parents, like teachers, can play different roles during family reading; they can be facilitators, model readers, listeners, or storytellers. They could also scaffold their children with good rapport to boost young children's motivation. Parents are likely to be more capable of dealing with problems in reading than their children and thus can help their children solve problems until the

young ones can read independently. One of the problems for family reading is the parents' English ability (Wang, 2006; Zeng, 2007). However, it is possible that during parent-child reading, the parent can re-learn English with their children.⁵³ Both parties can benefit from such programme.

Since ER programmes can take place in various forms, and not all parents are willing to take part in a study, it can be necessary to adopt two forms at the same time to investigate the effect of extra-curricular input. In the present study, it was necessary to use a family reading group and a passive reading group in which children read on their own. In both first and second language development, students who participate in classes that include an in-school self-selected reading programme (known as sustained silent reading) typically outperform comparison students, especially when the duration of treatment is longer than an academic year (Krashen, 1993; 2001; 2003b; 2005c). An advantage of having two groups is to be able to look at parent variables.

The literature review in this and the previous chapter has covered the primary issues, the framework and the context of the current study: the age factor, primary foreign language education, importance of input, second language reading and vocabulary, the extensive reading approach, family literacy and the Taiwanese context. In the following chapter, the methodology of the study will be presented in detail.

Now, we shall recapitulate the information in chapters so far in order to situate the method of investigation used for this study. This study seeks to explore the possibilities of providing extra-curricular input through an extensive English storybook reading programme which is scaffolded by parents. It looks at the interaction between parents and children during joint reading and its impact on the learners' language development in Taiwan, where English is now taught as a foreign language from the third grade of primary schools nationwide.

It is widely believed that learning a second language early on can result in higher achievement and this belief has led to the implementation of primary foreign language programmes worldwide. However, research also shows older child and adult learners

⁵³ Generally speaking, high school English is around four lessons a week (50 minutes a lesson) throughout secondary school (six years) (Taiwan Elementary and Secondary Educator Community, 2006). That means a parent would have had around 800 hours of instruction at schools before s/he finished secondary school, or half of the hours if s/he only finished junior high school. Junior high school English includes tenses, aspects, coordination and subordination clauses (Ministry of Education of R.O.C., 26/05/2008). Senior high school English includes revisions of junior high school English and more complex grammar.

are more efficient learners; an early start does not guarantee better achievement. There are other variables which can affect the learning outcome, particularly amount of exposure, which has been argued to be one of the most important variables in successful L2 acquisition. The chief contention of the present study is that Taiwanese primary English learners lack sufficient exposure to English and this influences their success in L2 learning. Schools have tried to provide English lessons as much as they can, but there is little they can do. Learners need to shift their attention to language exposure possible after school because this extra-curricular input can be a reinforcing agent which boosts proficiency. To deal with the central questions raised in this study, a review of the research on early L2 acquisition/learning was undertaken to show the importance of this key to success, and how the amount of exposure or input can have an impact on learning outcome.

The review of empirical studies in L2 acquisition on the age factor indicates that L2 learners need to be exposed to the target language as much as possible (section 2.1.2). Researchers have suggested that one of the prerequisites for language acquisition to take place is the large quantity of input (e.g., Krashen, 1981; 1985; Long, 1996). Researchers, e.g. Mahadeo (2003), argue language acquisition occurs when there is adequate exposure to language input data, not only inside but also outside of the classroom. The quantity of input, nonetheless, is not the only factor in language acquisition. The quality also matters. Therefore, one must examine language input from different viewpoints to see what kind of input can benefit learners. In other words, how much input and what kind of input can stimulate L2 proficiency. In a non-targetlike language context such as Taiwan, we then on the basis of results from a survey of teachers and students concluded that real and comprehensible written language input can be provided through English storybooks (section 2.5.2) with/out parents' help at home (section 2.5.3). The extensive reading approach and family literacy have both received empirical support, and while their combination in L2 is still under exploration, there is a good possibility that such a programme will produce positive results in primary EFL in Taiwan.

4.1 Overview of the study

Chapter 3 included two parts: the context of the current study and the survey results. Through the review of Taiwanese EFL context and curriculum (section 3.1), it was concluded that learners are not sufficiently exposed to target language input for acquisition to take place. The baseline study also confirmed the literature review results (section 3.3.3). Encouraging extra-curricular input through family extensive reading is one way to improve the Taiwanese primary learners' English proficiency because it can be adapted to fit the national curriculum, as Day and Bamford (1998) suggest.

In this chapter, we will look first at the pilot study and then at the main study. Given their common methodology and research questions, they are introduced together. I will then describe the pilot study because its results had an influence on the modification of the main study.

4.2 Research questions and study design

This section discusses the pilot study research questions and main study research questions and hypotheses, before turning to how both studies were designed.

The research project involved three initial questions at the end of chapter two.

1. Can 'home extensive reading' succeed in supplementing primary EFL instruction by providing more extra-curricular input?
2. Does home reading positively influence learners' English proficiency?
3. How do the children (and parents) go about the task of reading?

Based on the discussion in the previous chapter, including the results of the baseline survey, the broad research questions can be specified as the following set of narrower sub-questions.

- 1.a Do children enjoy reading English storybooks?
- 1.b Do children enjoy reading with their parents?
- 1.c Does extra-curricular reading change the participants' attitude and behaviour?
- 2.a Do the readers outperform the non-readers in the programme?

- 2.b If they do, what areas of English are improved?
- 3.a How do children feel about the reading?
- 3.b How do parents read with their children?
- 3.c What problems are encountered?

These questions form the basis of hypotheses in the main study, which will be introduced later in section 4.6.

4.3 Pilot study: *Reading Together – Parents and Children*

The pilot study was conducted in the mode of descriptive research, which presents the features of being both heuristic and deductive: in order to obtain more research data, both qualitative and experimental research methods are adopted (Seliger & Shohamy, 2003).

4.3.1 Purpose of the pilot study

The main objective of the thesis was to see the effect on English proficiency using the innovative method of family extensive reading for primary English learners in Taiwan as a way of increasing input. Therefore methods needed to be refashioned for this specific context and subjects before its effectiveness could be assessed. This meant that a pilot study was required in order to:

- examine the adapted methods in extensive reading and family literacy to see if they fitted the context
- explore the methodology through which the effectiveness of these methods could be assessed
- reformulate that methodology for the main study on the basis of the exploration.

Most importantly, the pilot study was intended as a trial for the research methods in order that any necessary improvements could be made to the research approach and finalized in order to carry out the main study.

4.3.2 Pilot study: Methodology

The pilot study was carried out in January 2005 to measure the feasibility of such a project at the primary level in Taiwan and to get a general idea of how many people would be interested in reading projects and how family reading takes place, in

addition to testing the instruments chosen for the study.

4.3.3 Methods of Data Collection

Through appointments with two schools in the largest city in central Taiwan and the teachers, an agreement was made to give out a handout explaining the project with a consent form (November 2004) (Appendix 16). I explained the ethics of my methodology, guaranteeing that all information provided to me would remain confidential and no real names would be used. Most of the research in second language acquisition uses human subjects, who may be involved in experiments in which a certain treatment is administered to them. Since the data collected are from human subjects, attention must be given to the ethical considerations involved in conducting research, especially data from children. Confidentiality of research data has therefore been maintained. Every precaution was taken to inform the subjects (children and their parents) concerning the nature of the study. Since school children were involved, I deemed it fit to inform their parents before the study was conducted about the purpose and procedure of the study (Mahadeo, 2003). When the consent forms distributed were returned, the researcher either met or telephoned the parents and the children to decide which group they should join (December 2004), start reading and take tests. The pilot study focused more on the questionnaires, reading records, and proficiency tests than on the qualitative instrument, i.e. audio recordings of reading sessions and telephone interviews which were used in the main study.

4.3.3.1 Instruments

Five types of instruments were designed to collect data for both the pilot and main study. Questionnaires, reading records and audio recordings were used to learn about the participants' reading. Telephone interview helped to clarify, obtain and confirm data. Proficiency tests were required to measure the learners' level change.

A. Questionnaires

Questionnaires are very often used to collect information on opinions, behaviour, and biodata; therefore, questionnaires were used in the pilot study (S. J. Chai, 2001; Y. F. Chang, 2003; J. Y. Wang, 2006) (see also Dörnyei, 2003). Four sets of questionnaires were used, i.e. pre- and post-treatment questionnaires for parents (Appendix 4, 5), and pre- and post-treatment questionnaires for children (Appendix 6, 7). In the pre-treatment questionnaires, there were 39 close-ended questions on the parents'

questionnaire and 36 close-ended questions on the children's questionnaire, assigned to seven parts in the questionnaire. The close-ended questions had between three and five possible options, and some in 5-point Likert Scale. They asked about (1) the participants' English learning experience; (2) their home learning environment; (3) their reading habits; (4) their reading attitude; (5) reading together; (6) their reading behaviour and (7) the application problems. The questionnaires were designed to investigate the parent and child's feelings about home-based reading. The questionnaires were adapted from Day and Bamford (1998), Branston and Provis (1986), Smith and Elley (1998) and Smith, Shirley and Visser (1996b). For instance, the length of time learning English and whether the participants had contact with English in their daily life were questioned. The number of English children's books, tapes and CDs at home, the amount of English programming on TV, and space for reading were included. Questions regarding reading habit, the frequency and length of reading of both the parent and child, and family reading experience were asked. Reading attitude questions asked whether the participants liked reading, agreed reading can improve English, were confident in their own English and in what areas they thought English was most difficult. A family reading section asked about the family's book buying pattern, participants' favorite genre, and interaction pattern. Dictionary usage was in the reading behaviour section, followed by anticipated implementation problems, e.g. whether the participants thought 15 minutes and four times a week would be a burden.

Although considerable research has demonstrated that attitudinal and motivational variables are related to the learning of a second language (Clément & Kruidenier, 1983; Dörnyei, 1994a; 1994b; Gardner, 1985), much of the research has probed these variables using the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) (Gardner, 1985) or tests derived from it (2.5.3). In AMTB, the section on 'parental encouragement' asks the learners their feelings and projections towards their parents', e.g. 'My parents try to help me with my French', 'My parents feel that because we live in Canada, I should learn French'. This framework differs from that used in the current study, which directly investigated children and parents' feelings about extensive reading and family literacy and questions were therefore adopted from previous studies on these topics, as stated above.

The post-treatment questionnaires for parents included twenty close-ended questions and five open-ended questions, whereas for the children there were 21 close-ended questions and three open-ended questions. Most of the close-ended questions were in 5-point Likert Scale, others, like genre selection, included more options as needed.

Due to the fact that the participants were from different classes and schools and the lack of time at school, the questionnaires for both the parents and children had to be handed to the children at school and returned individually.

B. Reading records

After each reading session, parents and children filled in separate records, the idea for which was adapted from the book report form in Day and Bamford (1998:147), and which aimed to obtain information about reading frequency, the participants' feelings about the reading, and their reading methods (see Appendix 8 for parents and Appendix 9 for children). The first part of the record collected data on dates reading took place, participants of the reading, book title and sources, and use of tapes; there were 7 close-ended questions and 1 open-ended question. In the second part, another 7 close-ended questions and two open-ended questions were used to know about the reading. The format for the reading record was prepared prior to implementation by stapling ten double-sided copies together to form a booklet, given to the participants when they started reading. I asked the participants to take notes in Chinese immediately after they read using the booklet I provided for them. Through the records, I could look into how the parent perceived the child's reading and how the parent felt about the reading. By having a different record for the child, I could see if there was a difference in their perceptions of the books, the reading methods, or the problem solving techniques. The information was expected to be instant and detailed because the reading process had just happened.

C. Audio-recordings for observation

Audio-tape recording was used to collect data for family reading sessions. The recording aimed to assist the understanding the way the participants read together, how they used the materials, the techniques parents engaged in during the joint reading, and to investigate what difficulties participants encountered during the reading. All participants of the family reading group were asked to record their reading sessions. So as to obtain the raw data and observe the most natural reading process, I tried not to intervene while they were reading, although some parents kept asking for my directions. I tried not to tell them what to do during the study and encouraged them to read the parents' guidebook, which is described in the next session, and encourage their ways of reading together. As the aim of this pilot study was to see if this kind of project can be implemented in Taiwan and to find out

whether the recordings for observation were possible, equipment-wise. Strong intervention was not necessary at this stage.

D. Telephone Interviews

Another qualitative data collection technique used was the semi-structured telephone interview. This technique was used to communicate with and direct the participants about the procedure at the initial stage of the study, remind the participants to read, confirm some of the missing data and see if the data in the questionnaire was representative of the participants' real behaviour. After receiving the consent forms, I started contacting the parents via telephone. Although my original idea was to have a meeting at school with the parents, it was cancelled because of scheduling difficulties among the parents.

The telephone interviews were semi-structured and usually took place in the evening. I tried to keep the interviews short by confining the discussion to the very general issues in my list. The parents and I mainly talked about parent-child book reading and I took notes at the same time. We talked about how they read at home, how they felt about the books and their ideas about parent-child book reading (see Appendix 10).

Some parents and children would receive a second telephone interview when they raised questions or when the children stopped reading. I also called to talk to the children about their feelings and difficulties they faced. The language used in interviews was Mandarin or sometimes the Taiwanese dialect, which are the major languages used in Taiwan and the most familiar to the participants.

E. Proficiency test

To find out if this project can help improve learners' English, it was necessary to know the level of learners' current language ability for later comparison. As the section on the problems of primary English education in Taiwan indicated, young learners differ widely in their levels of proficiency. However, it was difficult to find an appropriate test for this at the time.

Pre- and post-treatment tests for both parents and children were given at the beginning and the end of the project accordingly. For the children, two mock tests of Level 3 from 'Mock tests for the national standardised tests for children – Style & JET' were used (Appendix 11). The mock tests were published by Caves Educational Training

Co., Ltd. There are 6 levels in total and level three was chosen for this study because it tests present simple tense, which was deemed appropriate for the learners' levels. In the pre-test sample (Appendix 11), the sentences were all in present simple tense. Each mock test consists of two main parts; reading and listening comprehension. The first part has four sections: 1) matching sentences with pictures, 2) writing words in crosswords with picture clues, 3) reading comprehension of a paragraph (writing true and false values of descriptions of the paragraph), and 4) fill in vocabulary by picture hint. In the listening comprehension part, the learners only needed to tick, fill in yes or no, and write down some words in the last part, including number for age, date of birth, phone number and favorite colour.

The post-test for children was also from level three (Appendix 12). The same format applied to this sample test. However, this one included two sentences of past tense, 'What day was it yesterday' and its answer 'It was Wednesday', and one of future tense: 'What are you going to do tomorrow?' and its reply 'I'm going to go to the park'.

Considering the nine-year obligatory education background for the general public in Taiwan, this means that most of the parents would have received at least 3 years of English in their junior high school (footnote 53 in chapter three). I therefore decided to use the beginner-level (upper-intermediate) mock tests for 'General English Proficiency Test' for them, which is a proficiency English test developed and promoted by the Taiwanese government in the hope of increasing Taiwan's English proficiency (Appendix 13 and Appendix 14). The test covers three language skills: listening, reading and writing. However, it was made clear to the parents that if the tests were too difficult, they could decline to take them, in order to reduce their resistance towards the programme.

4.3.3.2 Participants

Thirty-four children and twenty-one parents from two schools in Taichung City (centrally located and one of the largest cities in Taiwan) were asked to read together at home for 15 minutes at least 4 times a week for a month. School A is in the city centre and school B in the now prosperous suburbs. At the beginning of January 2005, only students from the first school (A) volunteered to take part in the study; however, a second school (B) decided to join in from the middle of January. The students from School A were from Grade 6 (age 12) and the students from School B were Grade 5 (age 11). Since this research involved parents and children reading English books

together regularly for four weeks, my ideal participants had to be interested in parent-child English book reading, have time for practising this reading project and be willing to be recorded. Due to the amount of time required and lack of confidence in English ability, not many parents were willing to join in this research. Some parents did not feel comfortable with the proposed session recording. As a result, after giving out the handout about the project at five classes in total (average class size: 30), only a few decided to join in. Five students and four parents decided to drop the project for various reasons.

Parents and children could decide which group they wanted to join after discussion. Considering the mixed levels of the participants and the difficulties of accessing English books, as mentioned in Chapter 2, I decided to give the participants an option of choosing their own books. Another three volunteer learners participated in the programme as the control group. As a result, there were 5 groups of participants as shown in Table 4.1, according to the willingness of the parents to participate and the choice of selecting books on their own.

Table 4.1 Number of participants in the pilot study

	Children	Parents
Group 1: Parents with free choice of books	10	10
Group 2: Parents with assigned books	11	11
Group 3: No parents with free choice of books	8	n/a
Group 4: No parents with assigned books	2	n/a
Group 5: Control group – no reading	3	n/a
Total	34	21

4.3.3.3 Materials for reading

Prior to the pilot study, I visited the public libraries and the libraries of the schools in the study and found that there were only a few (less than 50 in total) English storybooks for young learners, which were for native English children. Moreover, this was much under the suggested ratio two to four books per learner in extensive reading literature, as mentioned in chapter two (see section 2.5.1.4). Therefore, I decided to provide materials for the pilot study. The materials I provided in this study for the participants to read at home were mostly readers.

Some participants already had some reading materials at home, and I did not request that they use my books only. Although extensive reading projects expect children (and/or parents on family reading programmes) to choose the books they consider interesting as pointed out in Chapter two, most children and parents asked the

researcher to choose the books for them. After quick research on readers in several book publishers and bookshops, I chose 32 books with a wide range of topics and levels, mainly from level one to level three (details in the next paragraph) from three series: *Step into Reading (Random House Books for Young Readers)*, *Hello Reader Series (Scholastic Readers)* and *Scholastic Reader Series*. These books were chosen based on the principles from literature that recommend how teachers and parents should choose books for young language learners and the publisher's recommendation. For example, C. Chen's (2002) criteria were simple language, repeated patterns and beautiful pictures. J. Zheng (1999) suggested appropriate grammatical and vocabulary level, predictable plots, appropriate level of cognition and intelligence, and content that is interesting to the readers. Then I took them to the school and let the children choose the one that interested them or suited their English level best. Table 4.2 presents the book list.

Inside the readers, there were parents' guides given by the publishers on how to choose the right books and how to lead the reading (Appendix 15). Level discretion is given, although different publishers or series have different criteria. For example, in *Step into Reading* series by *Random House Books for Young Readers*, there are five steps (levels) of their readers. Step one aims for preschool/kindergarten children, who know the alphabet and are eager to begin reading, with big type and easy words, rhyme and rhythm and picture clues. Step two books are for preschool to grade-one children who recognise familiar words and sound out new words with help; basic vocabulary, short sentences and simple stories are the contents. Step three is for grade-one to grade-three children who are ready to read on their own, so the contents are aimed more towards engaging characters, easy-to-follow plots and popular topics. Step four, containing challenging vocabulary, short paragraphs, and exciting stories, is designed for grade 2-3 children who are newly independent readers and who can read simple sentences with confidence. Step five, for grades 2-4, has chapters, longer paragraphs, full-color art; this level is for children who want to take the plunge into chapter books but still like colourful pictures. On the other hand, the *Scholastic Reader* series has only four levels. The *Hello Reader Series* starts from simple words and short sentences for level one, some new vocabulary and longer sentences for beginning readers at level two, longer stories with paragraphs at level three and chapter books (books organised in chapter form) for advanced beginners at level four.

Table 4.2 Pilot study – book list

	Book Title	Level	Publisher
1.	Piglet feels small	Early	Step into Reading, Random House Books for Young Readers
2.	Cooking with the Cat!	1	Step into Reading, Random House Books for Young Readers
3	All Stuck Up	1	Step into Reading, Random House Books for Young Readers
4.	Happy Birthday Little Witch	1	Step into Reading, Random House Books for Young Readers
5.	P.J. Funny Bunny Camps Out	1	Step into Reading, Random House Books for Young Readers
6.	Sir Small and the Dragonfly	1	Step into Reading, Random House Books for Young Readers
7.	Polar Bears	1	Hello Reader, Scholastic Inc.
8.	Counting Sheep	2	Step into Reading, Random House Books for Young Readers
9.	Noah's Ark	2	Step into Reading, Random House Books for Young Readers
10.	Statue of Liberty	2	Step into Reading, Random House Books for Young Readers
11.	Birthday Present for Mama	2	Step into Reading, Random House Books for Young Readers
12.	David and the Giant	2	Step into Reading, Random House Books for Young Readers
13.	Molly the Brave and Me	2	Step into Reading, Random House Books for Young Readers
14.	Monkey Monkey's Trick	2	Step into Reading, Random House Books for Young Readers
15.	New Brain for Igor	2	Step into Reading, Random House Books for Young Readers
16.	Five Silly Fishermen	2	Step into Reading, Random House Books for Young Readers
17.	The Best Mistake Ever!	2	Step into Reading, Random House Books for Young Readers
18.	Pooh's Easter Egg Hunt	2	Step into Reading, Random House Books for Young Readers
19.	My Loose Tooth	2	Step into Reading, Random House Books for Young Readers
20.	Peanut	2	Step into Reading, Random House Books for Young Readers
21.	Roller Skates	2	Hello Reader, Scholastic Inc.
22.	Wake me in Spring	2	Hello Reader, Scholastic Inc.
23.	More Spaghetti, I Say	2	Hello Reader, Scholastic Inc.
24.	The Wrong-way Rabbit!	2	Hello Reader, Scholastic Inc.
25.	The Missing Tooth	3	Step into Reading, Random House Books for Young Readers
26.	Missing Watermelon Money	3	Step into Reading, Random House Books for Young Readers
27.	The Headless Horseman	3	Step into Reading, Random House Books for Young Readers
28.	Dinosaur Days	3	Step into Reading, Random House Books for Young Readers
29.	The Popcorn Shop!	3	Hello Reader, Scholastic Inc.
30.	Fluffy Saves Christmas	3	Hello Reader, Scholastic Inc.
31.	The First Thanksgiving	3	Hello Reader, Scholastic Inc.
32.	Fluffy and the Firefighters	3	Hello Reader, Scholastic Inc.

The *Scholastic Reader Series* categorises similarly. Both of them are ELT materials, and meant for ages four to twelve. *Scholastic Readers* provides advice for joint reading and principles of how to listen to a child read aloud. Unfortunately, the vocabulary size of each level of these readers is not specified in the book information. Only a levels chart is provided online (Scholastic Inc.).⁵⁴

All learners in the study received the first book from me as an encouragement for reading. For those who chose to read assigned books, I had prepared three other books (mostly from the titles above) according to the ratio that research suggests (e.g. Day & Bamford, 1998; Bloom & United Kingdom Reading Association, 1987) for the assigned-book group, and the parents bought some or all of them, according to their wishes. All participants were directed to sources of books, e.g. libraries and bookshops, including the ones who were assigned books because all of the participants were encouraged to read more than the books provided.

4.3.3.4 Procedure

At the beginning of the programme (December 2004), books and reading record booklets were then given to the participants individually, together with the pre-treatment questionnaires and pre-tests to both parents and children. Then the participants started their home joint reading (and recording) or independent reading and kept doing so for four weeks (January 2005).

The original research design included a weekly meeting for all parents for discussion, idea exchange, and experience sharing. However, there were considerable difficulties in scheduling. Therefore the weekly meeting was replaced by telephone contact, so as to be able to understand how this reading project would work at home and to help in applying the materials and update the family reading group or the independent child reader's reading status.

After one month (February 2005), the post-treatment questionnaires and post-tests were given. Reading records and tapes were collected, together with the questionnaires and tests. The data were then used to examine the procedural problems

⁵⁴ Scholastic Readers: Pre-Beginner: Limited knowledge of English alphabet; Beginner: Some knowledge of English alphabet and phonics; High-Beginner: Able to read simple words and short sentences with assistance; Pre-Intermediate: Able to read simple words and short sentence independently; Intermediate: Able to read more words and longer sentences independently; High-Intermediate: Able to determine meaning of unfamiliar words independently; Advanced: Able to read first chapter books independently (Scholastic Inc.).

for the main study; for instance, whether the paper workload was too heavy for the participants.

4.3.3.5 Methods of Data Analysis

Since the pilot study was intended to study the feasibility of such a reading project and to know how the families coped with the reading, the data collected were only descriptively analysed. Qualitative data, such as the participants' opinions and feedback from phone interviews and reading records, were transcribed and studied to look at problems during application. Quantitative data, such as information from the questionnaires, reading records and tests were used to examine reliability and validity of these instruments.

4.3.3.6 Pilot study: Results

This section will first present data collected before the experiment and then move on to the post-treatment data, followed by some special issues discovered.

Regarding students' English learning experience, 22 learners said they started learning English from 1st and 2nd grades and the other 12 learners said they started from grade three and four, which means that their schools had been teaching English to students much earlier than the MOE requirement. Looking at English learning at cram schools, only two of the learners said they did not have this experience. A very high percentage of students (26 among the 34) said they started going to cram schools before third grade. Furthermore, more than nine students said they had been learning English for one to two years, 11 said three to four years and most of the students (14/34) said they had been learning English for longer than five years. All of the above suggested that the learners had more experience of English learning at cram schools than at schools. Twenty of the students said they used English most at English classes at school or cram school, indicating that learning in Taiwan was more confined to classroom than outside, which fits the presumption of the needs to promote extra-curricular input for ELT learners.

On parents' English background, most parents (26 among the 34) had more than three years of learning experience and thus should possess basic knowledge and skills of English. However, most of the parents do not require English in their daily life. 21 parents considered their English above average and no parents disliked English learning.

Generally speaking, students' attitude toward English was positive. Only three of them said they disliked English and only six of them thought their English level was below average. While being asked about which area of English was the most difficult, most of the students chose writing, vocabulary and grammar; only one chose reading. If difficulty means a negative attitude, this showed that young learners did not have particular negative attitude towards English reading. However, five learners thought that reading English for fun was not easy, but twenty said they had no special opinions and thirteen said they liked English reading in their leisure time. 28 child participants said they were very willing to use this method to learn English and 32 were willing to read English every day. When asked about the most difficult area in English reading, the students thought the top three areas were vocabulary (19 tokens), long or difficult content (7 tokens) and difficult grammar (4 tokens). 18 students said they felt anxious or nervous when there were unknown words, and 23 chose to use a dictionary to solve problems. Most of the students said they were confident if they were asked to read in English, and only two of them disagreed.

On family English resources, most families had more than a few English books. Only three of the participant families had no English storybooks for children. 17 of them had less than twenty books, four had between 21 to 40 books and 10 had more than forty books.⁵⁵ On English tapes and CDs, five said they did not have any, 15 families had less than twenty, four had between 21 to 40, and 10 had more than forty tapes. However, most students said they thought the books at home did not really interest them; only 15 thought the books at home were interesting. More than three-quarters of the children said they read less than two English books per week, which was less than the amount they read in Chinese, with more than 60% of the students saying they read more than three Chinese books per week. Around 70% of the children said they only occasionally read leisure books and the main reasons to read them were to find information for schoolwork and to improve writing, not to entertain or for interest. Twenty-five students said the reason they could not read for leisure was because they had too many assignments. While being asked about the amount of time they were willing to spend on English reading if there were no other classes to go to after school (e.g. learning an instrument or cram school), more than 80% of the students said they would spend one hour reading English.

On family reading, students seemed to prefer parents' company over reading alone:

⁵⁵ Unfortunately, the level and type of the English books were not specified at the time of the study. However, the questions did refer to children's storybooks.

only three students did not want parents' company. Among three choices given to help English reading (listening to story-tapes while reading, reading books alone, and reading with parents), more than half of the students thought reading with parents could increase their interest in learning the most. Eleven children said their parents did not often read with them, and among the remaining 23 children, 16 said their family reading was mainly Chinese books. On the parents' side, all parents agreed that parents' company can help increase children's interest in English reading. The majority agreed that the advantages of family reading were to increase knowledge, to increase creativity and imagination, and to develop language ability and interest. All of the parents agreed that English leisure reading could improve English proficiency, especially in reading, writing and vocabulary.

On implementation, before the treatment 94% of the students were happy with the length of 15 minutes each time, and 82% thought four times a week was acceptable. Most of the parents also agreed with the length and frequency. They anticipated that the main problems in practice would include the parents' English level, the recording and the children's English level. In addition, no time for home reading, book sources, the frequency and the child's low interest in reading were also mentioned.

After the programme, most of the participants still had positive opinions towards the programme. More than one-third of the students agreed that this could help them learn English and only three thought reading English was difficult compared to six before the project. 24 thought this way of learning was interesting. 21 said they were less nervous and more confident when they read English after the project. On reading comprehension, 16 said they were more confident in comprehending English texts. Given several ways of coming into contact with English, 12 learners chose books, 12 chose films, 6 chose audiotapes and the remaining four chose others. This showed that students still thought books were a good way of learning. In particular, when I compared the English books read before and after the project as shown in the Table 4.3, the books read after the pilot study increased. The results further showed that their Chinese reading did not increase. Therefore, students seemed receptive and the programme seemed to benefit their reading. However, three children said they would not make recommendations to others and one of them did not want to take part in similar programmes.

Table 4.3 Comparison of the amount of books read before and after pilot study

Books read (per week)	Before pilot study	After pilot study
0-1	19	13
2-3	8	13
3-4	7	8

Similar results were also found in the parents' feedback. Parents generally supported the reading project and showed they had the ability to accomplish the project. Overall, the parents' evaluation of the programme was positive; 23 rated it highly, nine chose average, and two did not answer the question. All of the parents thought that they found out more about their children's English level and their learning situations, and they thought that this learning method was interesting. They thought it increased the children's learning interest, comprehension, and their confidence, in addition to the positive change in children's reading time at home. Twenty parents wanted to continue this reading activity. However, thirteen parents felt this kind of programme was a burden, and thus the percentage of willingness to recommend this was lower than before the experiment; only 19 said they would do so. It was therefore decided that the length and frequency of reading should be adjusted in the main study. In addition, some families had problems in terms of lacking the recording equipment, which required me to provide the recorder. Furthermore, most of the participants were unwilling to record themselves; only one child recorded more than three sessions but he was reading alone on the tape, and the parent remained silent. Also, parents generally thought that they lacked the skills to read with their children and thought they needed some training beforehand, although only four parents said they had prepared before reading with their children. This seemed to suggest that parents needed some direction in reading method and time management and led the researcher to think that a guidebook would help.

With regard to family reading, most children said they preferred parents' company after the pilot experiment. Twenty four of them thought reading with parents could bring more enjoyment. Comparing this to the results before the programme, the number of children who preferred reading with their parents increased from four to fifteen. Twenty-six children thought they could understand more when they read with their parents. In the interview, one child from school B explicitly expressed his interest in reading through reading with his father and expressed the desire to continue to read.

Regarding books, children said they were most interested in storybooks novels. Generally speaking, children did not have particular opinions on who chose books for them; there were nearly equal numbers of children who wanted to choose books for themselves and who wanted their parents to choose for them. However, the parents seemed to want either the children or the researcher to choose books. Participants seemed to be somewhat passive in finding English books by themselves, although many of them said in the feedback they would like to have more books, suggesting that source, choice and availability of the books would be an important factor in the main study. The books chosen for the pilot study seemed to be at the right level and interested the children, according to their feedback.

Unfortunately, the interview and reading record showed that, in practice, it was difficult for the participants to reach the target of expected frequency of four times a week. Participants did not have time to read this often. Children had to go to cram school, do their homework or practise instruments. Parents were busy at work and sometimes could not make time for the reading. Some records also showed that reading length was not controlled at fifteen minutes, but much longer, although with less frequency. Parents also had various opinions on how long the reading session should be, from thirty minutes to one or two hours. As stated above, this needed to be adjusted in the subsequent study because of the following reasons: 1) children have a shorter concentration span than adults (Huang, 2003); 2) Day and Bamford (1998:84) suggested that beginner readers generally cannot read for as long as more advanced learners. It is not only that they read more slowly, they also get tired more quickly; 3) as we have seen in chapter two, multiple exposure to words is important in extensive reading. Therefore, it is probably better to make short and frequent contact with input than long and rare contact.

Audio-recording of reading sessions showed how the interaction was taking place during the reading. Ten parents read with their children, indicating that the method worked well. However, eleven let their children read books to them or alone. More than half of these cases used sentence-by-sentence translation by the children for comprehension checking or the parents translated the sentences for the children. The discussion in all cases of joint reading focused only on the English language itself. No conversation apart from the texts was observed. The illustrations were hardly discussed and the reading skill of 'guessing from the context' was not used. The parent participants used a low-demand strategy with immediate talk to read (Beals & De Temple, 1992), which contrasted with the benefits of joint reading (Baker *et al.*, 2001, see chapter 2, section 2.5.3; Huebner & Meltzoff, 2005). The participants all used a

dictionary to check unknown vocabulary.

Regarding proficiency tests, unfortunately, only a few parents (five) took the tests. Some parents asked the child to finish the tests for them. Since the test was carried out at home, I could not monitor them and some parents said they used dictionaries during the test. This result of the pilot study showed this is a methodological problem. It was difficult to measure the parents' proficiency in a similar way and the test results would not be a reliable measure of any changes in the parental proficiency, in addition to the low rate of taking the tests. Therefore, the idea of investigating parental proficiency improvement after joint reading was withdrawn in the main study. Furthermore, the proficiency test for the children was probably too easy. Most of the children scored very high in the proficiency tests. This indicated a limited space for improvement. In addition, the pre-test and post-test results did not differ, but this could have been due to the short study period.

Although the questionnaires in the current study revealed good information, they had one methodological flaw. The four sets of data discussed above could not be compared because questions on the questionnaire were not identical or in symmetry for quantitative inferential statistics analysis. Thus in the main study, only one questionnaire was used, with some questions added for specific direction, for parents to answer or for family reading groups. There was also a problem with the reading record; participants varied considerably in keeping these. Some took notes every time they read while others took notes once a week or once per book. Some did not write even this much. From the data I collected, there seemed to be a need to reduce paper work for the participants; therefore, I simplified the record format for the main study.

4.3.3.7 Pilot study: Discussion and Implications

The results and analysis of the pilot study yielded three main implications:

(1) The parents needed to improve their skills of reading with their children: a) to recognise their role in children's learning; b) to learn to choose good books and c) to understand joint reading. Research generally supported that family reading had a positive effect on the learners (albeit with some exceptions, e.g. Takase, 2004a, see section 2.5.3, family literacy). Where parents played an active role in supporting their children in their reading, there seemed to have been a positive effect on them. The pilot study data implied that the relationship between parent and home environment and students' reading habits was complex. Just having parents who read, or just

having books around the house alone did not seem to lead children to reading. It depended on how the parents and their children interacted with the materials that were available. Therefore, a guidebook to support parents' needs in such programmes was designed regarding the above-mentioned skills.

(2) The intervention and help of schools and form tutors is necessary in a reading project. Krashen (2004a) stressed that we should first improve the quality of the library so that children can be exposed to the good books they need.

(3) To Krashen, an ideal reading environment should not only have a great deal of interesting comprehensible reading materials and time (and a comfortable place) to read, but also minimum accountability (e.g. no required summaries or book reports) and a programme that lasts for more than a few months (Krashen, 2004a; 2004b). Although the reading conditions and environment for the Taiwanese primary English learners were not ideal, we should still encourage learners to keep on reading because research (as discussed in 2.5.1) (Krashen, 2004a; 2004b; Lee, 2004) still shows encouraging results under non-ideal conditions. Therefore, this programme aimed to investigate whether learners in an acquisition poor environment (section 3.2.8) can still benefit from extensive reading.

4.3.3.8 Pilot study: Improvements to testing instrument

The pilot study results showed a home reading project is feasible in Taiwan. However, as noted in the implications just reviewed and the above discussion, there were still problems to solve: book availability, questionnaire simplification, proficiency tests, time limitation, and recording and these needed to be dealt with carefully in the main study. Therefore, in the main study, the following was changed:

1. **Book availability:** A classroom library was set up with a collection of 100 books, 21 of which had audio tapes as supplementary materials for children to read and listen to at the same time.
2. **Questionnaires:** Different sets of questionnaires were difficult for quantitative analysis. Therefore, a new questionnaire was developed, with fewer questions and clearer layout and which could be applied to all participants and pre-/post experiment investigation, with minor adjustment for the control group and other sub-groups (e.g. parents).
3. **Proficiency tests:** New ones were investigated and designed which were more relevant to the Taiwanese national curriculum and could test a wider range of

levels. Parents' proficiency improvement was abandoned because of the low return rate and the monitor difficulty of the pilot study.

4. Reading time: It was adjusted in the main study, since four times a week seemed difficult. I decided to adopt Bloom's suggestion of twice a week (Bloom & United Kingdom Reading Association, 1987:48).
5. Recording: Most of the participants had recording equipment at home and thus two Walkmans were prepared by the researcher for those who did not, to enable them to record while reading. More communication with parents about participants' actual reading attitude and behaviour, interaction and implementation difficulties was needed in the main study.
6. Parents' knowledge about family extensive reading: I decided to design a parents' guidebook for the main study to provide more information about the project's framework and basis, with some simple activities parents could do at home with their children to increase reading fun.

4.4 Main Study Methodology

In this section, the details of the main study are given, including the aims, hypotheses and methodology.

4.5 Aims of the main study

The pilot study demonstrated the feasibility of home extensive reading as a way to increase young learners' extra-curricular input. The findings of the pilot study led to some adjustments to the design of the main study, realised in these five main aims:

- a.) to reassess the implementation of home extensive reading already explored in the pilot study,
- b.) to measure the influence of the intervention on changes in learners' attitudes and behaviour to language learning,
- c.) to study the impact of the intervention on the improvement of learners' proficiency,
- d.) to find out whether parents were able to provide input at home,
- e.) to track parent-child interaction during the reading,
- f.) to know how children approach reading.

The relationship between the aims of the study and the research questions were straightforward. Aim (a) was to test if the changes made in the main study solved the

problems in the pilot study and if the main study programme was smoothly carried out. Aim (b) investigated changes in learners' attitude, behaviour and reading amount and evaluated the success of the treatment based on the results. These two aims were related to the first research question (RQ1: Can 'home extensive reading' succeed in supplementing primary EFL instruction by providing more extra-curricular input?), which was ultimately about the longer-term sustainability of an extra-curricular reading programme. Aim (c) looked into the L2 proficiency improvement after the programme, which matched the second research question (RQ2: Does home reading positively influence learners' English proficiency?) on proficiency change. The other three aims were all related to the last research question (RQ3: How do the children (and parents) go about the task of reading?) because this looked in more detail at how the children (and parents) read and what they read.

4.6 Research hypotheses of the main study

In order to measure the real effectiveness of the family extensive reading method in depth, the main study adopted a set of hypotheses and both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. Quantitative data collection aims to respond to the research hypotheses below. These and sub-hypotheses were formulated based on the literature review, the initial questions at the end of the literature review, the sub-questions in section 4.2, the pilot study, and the aims of the main study. The first object of investigation in this study is whether children really read and if they had a good attitude towards reading. Then I wanted to see what happened at a macro-level, unrelated to language proficiency, and finally move on to see if reading had an influence on proficiency. Here the thesis involves two variables: what parents and children did and what effect it had on their proficiency. This is a somewhat ecological approach to research because it investigates theoretical issues in a real situation. We can now formulate the research (sub-)questions as hypotheses.

RQ1: Can 'home extensive reading' succeed in supplementing primary EFL instruction by providing more extra-curricular input?

Hypothesis 1. Home English extensive reading has a positive influence on the learners' attitude and changes behaviour:

- 1a. Home extensive reading has a positive effect on reading participants' (family readers and independent readers) attitude towards English reading.
- 1b. A home extensive reading project changes reading participants' (family readers and independent readers) behaviour, e.g. reading without stopping to check unknown words.

1c. The total number of reading sessions and attitude are positively correlated.

RQ2: Does home reading positively influence learners' English proficiency?

Hypothesis 2. Extra-curricular reading has a positive influence on primary learners' English proficiency.

2a. Reading improves learners' vocabulary.

2b. Reading improves learners' morpho-syntactic ability.

2c. Learners with a positive attitude have higher proficiency.

RQ3: How do the children (and parents) go about the task of reading?

Hypothesis 3. Parents will help provide English extra-curricular input at home.

3a. Participants will achieve the expected reading length and frequency.

3b. Parents will use interactive methods to read with their children.

3c. Children will enjoy reading with their parents.

3d. Participants will be able to find books at their level and interest.

3d-1. Children who enjoy reading (with a positive attitude) will be able to choose books which suit them.

3d-2. Children who are good at selecting the right books will read more.

3d-3. Children who are good at selecting the right books will make more progress, in vocabulary and morpho-syntax.

3d-4. Real books will be more popular than graded readers.

Before moving on to the next section, I would like to clarify on the difference between hypotheses 2a/2b and 3d-3. The former hypotheses covered all the child participants in the study (N=63). Hypothesis 3 looked in more detail at certain aspects of the study, namely, it sought to find out whether children knew how to choose books for themselves (based on Krashen's comprehension hypothesis) and whether their choice would make an impact on their proficiency development. A subset of the child participants who received treatment and chose the books at the 'linguistically appropriate' level, were studied (N=13) with regard to their proficiency improvement.

The research questions, hypotheses and data collection procedures are summarised in Table 4.4 on the next page.

Table 4.4 Research questions, hypotheses and methodology of the main study

Aims	Questions	Hypotheses	Sub-hypotheses	Tools
a.)to reassess the implementation of home extensive reading already explored in the pilot study, b.)to measure the influence of the intervention on changes in learners’ attitudes and behaviour to language learning,	1. Can ‘home extensive reading’ succeed in supplementing primary EFL instruction by providing more extra-curricular input?	1. Home English extensive reading has a positive influence on the learners’ attitude and changes behaviour.	1a. Home extensive reading project has a positive effect on reading participants’ attitude towards English reading. 1b. Home extensive reading project changes reading participants’ behaviour.	Questionnaire, Interview
			1c. The total number of reading sessions and attitude are positively correlated	Questionnaire
				Questionnaire
c.)to study the impact of the intervention on the improvement of learners’ proficiency,	2. Does home reading positively influence learners’ English proficiency?	2. Extra- curricular reading has a positive influence on the primary learners’ English proficiency.	2a. Reading improves learners’ vocabulary. †	Test
			2b. Reading improves learners’ morpho-syntactic ability. †	Test
			2c. Learners’ with a positive attitude have higher proficiency.	Test, Questionnaire
d.)to find out whether parents were able to provide input at home, e.)to track parent-child interaction during the reading, f.) to know how children approach reading.	3. How do the children (and parents) go about the task of reading?	3. Parents will help provide English extra-curricular input at home.	3a. Participants will achieve the expected reading length and frequency.	Reading record, Interview, Questionnaire
			3b. Parents will use interactive methods to read with their children.	Reading record
			3c. Children will enjoy reading with their parents.	Questionnaire, Interview
			3d. Participants will be able to find books at their level and interest. 3d-1. Children who enjoy reading will be able to choose books which suit them. 3d-2. Children who are good at selecting the right books will read more. 3d-3. Children who are good at selecting the right books will make more progress in vocabulary and morpho-syntax. †† 3d-4. Real books will be more popular than graded readers.	Questionnaire, Interview, Recording, Reading records

† N=63; †† N=13

4.7 Participants

The school⁵⁶ chosen for the main study was School B from the pilot study because the school principal had known about my project from the pilot study and believed that reading English storybooks would help the learners' English proficiency. Having been in the primary education system for years and the principal of School B for 8 years, he was always open-minded and enthusiastic about the ideas or projects that he thought would be beneficial for learners. The principal had promoted English education for a while and there were English classes for children who wanted to participate in the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) (section 4.3.3.1), English and English film clubs for learners who want more English apart from their English classes, and English speech competition and so on. Therefore, the principal was very cooperative. The school had 50 classes in the primary section and two classes in the nursery. The number of the staff and students was 110 and 1,788 respectively. The average size of a class was 30, although it could be up to 35 in some cases. The school library used has a systematic computerized catalogue to manage its collection of 14,100 books and 15 magazines, and the number of new books in 2006 was 1,681. Unfortunately, there were few English storybooks (less than 20) in the library.

How are learners taught to read in Chinese and English?

A phonetic system called *zhuyin* (*fu hao*), different from the 'pinyin' used in mainland China, is used for transcribing Mandarin when learning to read, write or speak Mandarin. It is a semi-syllabary system, consisting of 37 letters and 4 tone marks, and represents all of the sounds of Mandarin.⁵⁷ Zhuyin is not based on consonants and vowels, but on syllable onsets and rimes. There are 21 consonants (onsets) and the remaining 16 are used as rimes (in Mandarin single vowels, diphthongs with some final consonants). Zhuyin is used to teach standard Mandarin pronunciation to children in primary education in Taiwan and thus usually appears next to the Chinese characters in young children's books or first year textbooks at primary school (age

⁵⁶ This 32-year-old state school is located in the suburb of Taichung City, which is the third largest city in Taiwan. The immediate surrounding neighborhood is quite a typical developed community; there are several department stores which are just a couple of miles away, i.e. it is not rural. The school has enjoyed a good reputation for a long time and is highly rated in many aspects. However, it is not one of those schools characterised as elitist, expensive or conservative, so my results can be generalised to other such average schools.

⁵⁷ The Zhuyin letters were mainly taken from ancient or cursive Chinese characters, or parts of such characters (Fang, 1965). In addition to teaching pronunciation to young children, Zhuyin is also used to help read classical texts, which frequently use characters that are uncommon in modern writing. The current policy requires primary learners to start Chinese language learning with a 10-week Zhuyin course because it is considered that the zhuyin is a prerequisite of Chinese character recognition, which later leads to independent reading (Wang, 2001b).

seven) (Kang Shuen Jiao Shi Wang, 2004a). For instance, the characters of ‘*zhu yin fu hao*’ are ‘注音符號’, and with zhuyin, it appears as in (3). Grade one textbooks of all subject (including Mandarin) are entirely in zhuyin. After that year, Chinese character texts are given in annotated form with zhuyin next to the characters to decode pronunciations and gradually the presence of zhuyin annotation is reduced, remaining only in the new character section.

(3).

注
音
符
號

Taiwanese primary learners’ phonemic awareness⁵⁸ begins to be developed through zhuyin. This does not yet involve the Roman alphabet. English phonemic awareness is new to young English beginners; they have to start from learning the letters and basic phonics. Many published textbooks (e.g. from Kang Shuen Publication company, one of the biggest publishers of teaching materials) for primary English are designed based on phonics (Kang Shuen Jiao Shi Wang, 2004b) and start introducing letter names and phonetic sounds in the first semester, (of 3rd grade, the year children start English classes at school, at age nine). Then, rules of phonics are gradually presented in the second semester but it generally takes around two to three years to build basic phonemic awareness. Following the textbooks based on the national curriculum, learners learn to read letters, vocabulary and short texts in their all-English textbooks from early stages so that they can develop their bottom-up skills.

The school followed the General Guidelines of Grade 1-9 Curriculum of Elementary and Junior High School Education (GGGC) by the Ministry of Education (MOE) for the English curriculum (discussed in Ch 3). That is, the learners had two English classes (45 minutes each) in a week (section 3.1.1). According to the general guidelines, a school decided its own course-books and all classes of each grade used the same course-book. Their course-book that year was ‘*Hello ABC*’ by Kang Xuan publishing company. In the description of the course-book, the publisher stated that

⁵⁸ Taiwanese primary learners will have phonemic awareness in onsets, but not rimes.

the series was for Grade 1-2. The first two books taught the 26 letters, whereas Books 3 and 4 taught basic phonics. The units included the alphabet/phonics, vocabulary, short conversations and rhymes. At the time the present study took place, the official implementation year was still the fifth year; therefore, these (fifth grade) participants had just started learning English if they followed the school curriculum and did not go to cram schools. However, as we will see later, many of them had had some English, probably from cram school instruction. This also led to the inevitable situation of a mixed-level class regarding English proficiency. The school had a website to help learners and teachers learn English, which contained themes like sentence of the week, activity photos, students' work, useful links, and useful terms on campus. In order to let the learners experience the culture of English speaking countries while learning English, the school also organised different activities and festivals according to western holidays, e.g. Halloween and Christmas.

During the study period, I was given 30-40 minutes every Wednesday morning for 10 weeks, under the permission of the principal and the form tutor, to come in to the class of the experimental group to introduce a (new) book to the learners in order to prompt their interest in English storybook reading and use of the classroom library (see 4.8.2.2 book collection) I set up for the project. I also used this time to administer my three proficiency tests.

Sixty-three grade 5 children (aged 10-11) from three classes (Class A, B, and C) participated in the main study. Regarding the sample, girls outnumbered boys slightly (26 boys and 37 girls). Parents' educational background was generally to college and university level (55.6%). In terms of the children's English learning experience, a higher percentage (61.9%) went to cram school or had an English tutor to learn English. Around 57.1% of the young participants had already had the experience of reading with their parents at home (mainly in Mandarin). Two-thirds of the child participants had more than 11 English storybooks or audio tapes/CDs at home; however, about one-third of all the participants (21) said that they had never used any of the books or audio tapes/CDs at home.

After discussing participant availability with the principal and the form tutors, they allowed me three classes to whom to introduce the project. Class A was recommended by the principal to be the target class due to the teacher's interest in English education. However, from my observation, conversation with the teacher and from the students' diary for homework, the teacher did not give extra English homework and did not promote English in any of the classroom activities during the study period, probably

because she was not the English subject teacher. Therefore, the keen teacher effect could be ruled out in the study. Classes B and C were later added to be my control group.

Table 4.5 Descriptive data of main study participants

	n	%
Groups (n=63)		
Male	26	41.3
Female	37	58.7
Parents' education		
Primary to high school	28	44.4
College, university and above	35	55.6
Cram school/Tutor		
No	24	38.1
Yes	39	61.9
Family reading experience (English)		
Yes	36	57.1
Using English resources at home		
No	21	33.3
Yes	42	66.7
No. of English storybooks at home		
0 -10	21	33.3
More than 11	42	66.7
No. of English story tapes/CDs at home		
0 -10	23	36.5
More than 11	40	63.5

Two groups of readers were identified for the study: a) the family reading group, in which the parents read with their children at home, and b) the reading alone group, in which only the child participated in the study and read alone at home. In the control group, the children did not read any more than they normally would have but took the questionnaire and proficiency tests. The control group parents also took the questionnaire. There were 29 children from Class A willing to take part in the project and they were then divided into the two experiment groups. Those children whose parents expressed their willingness to read with their children in the consent form were placed in the family reading group (11) and the other children (18) read on their own without parents at home, as they wished. Thirty-four children from Class B and Class C later joined the project as control group participants after they returned the consent form. The details of the groups are listed in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6 Group details of the main study

Groups (n=63)	FRG (n=11)	RAG (n=18)	CG (n=34)	Total (n=63)
Class	A	A	B (11) & C (23)	
Gender				
Male	4	9	13	26
Female	7	9	21	37
Parents' education				
Primary to college	4	10	14	28
College, university and above	7	8	20	35
Cram school/Tutor				
No	4	9	11	24
Yes	7	9	23	39
Family reading experience (English)				
No	3	10	14	27
Yes	8	8	20	36
Using English resources at home				
No	6	8	7	21
Yes	5	10	27	42
No. of English storybooks at home				
0-10	5	7	11	23
More than 11	6	11	23	40
No. of English storytapes/CDs at home				
0-10	5	9	10	24
More than 11	6	9	24	39

There were a few reasons why the learners in the main study were not tested on their bottom-up reading or top-down skills. First, the children's textbook was in English and the national curriculum encouraged teachers to speak English as much as possible during lessons. If a child can follow the lesson at school, s/he should possess these skills to a certain level. Second, many children actually started learning English at cram school much earlier than at school; therefore, their bottom-up skills had presumably been built. Third, during the conversation with the form tutor and the English subject teacher, this problem was never mentioned as an impediment to reading. Fourth, I did not come across any reading child that had bottom-up problems in the pilot study. Last, even if the learners' bottom-up skills might not have been mature enough to read fluently, their lessons at school should have provided them sufficient knowledge of phonics for reading simple beginner books. Neither was reading comprehension ability tested because this programme was not about reading comprehension improvement. Although excluding the testing of children's reading skills is perhaps a limitation of the study, due to reasons discussed above and to the constraints of time and resources, the present study does not investigate all possibly relevant factors. The implications of this limitation will be discussed in the final

chapter.

4.8 Treatment

This section introduces the procedures, materials and the instruments of the study. The procedures section gives the timeline of the whole study. The materials include the parents' guidebook, book collection and website. The instruments section describes the questionnaires (pre-/post-treatment questionnaires), the session recording form, home-reading recordings, interviews, vocabulary notebook, and the proficiency tests (pre-test, post-test, delayed post-test).

4.8.1 Procedure

The family reading project started in October 2005 and ended in January 2006, which was one academic semester in Taiwan.

First, the pre-treatment questionnaires (Appendices 18 and 19) for all participants (both parents and children) were given to fill in at home. The pre-test (for the children) was scheduled during the first week of the project at school (October 2005) (Appendices 20, 21). Then, a guidebook in Mandarin, prepared by me for the study, was given to the parents who participated (section 4.8.2.1 and Appendix 17). After reading the guidebook and getting answers to their questions from me, the experimental group parents started reading English storybooks with their children for 15-20 minutes at least twice a week at home and so did learners in the reading alone group. None of the children in the two experimental groups received guidance from me, apart from the basic instruction of reading for gist, choosing books of interest and feeling free to change books at any time. The classroom library was also set up the first week of the programme and the experimental group children were encouraged to take books home.

The second proficiency test (Appendices 20, 21) was given (post-test) at school in the last week of the semester (January 2006) and the post-treatment questionnaires were distributed again (Appendices 25-26) to all three groups. A delayed post-test (third proficiency test) was given (Appendix 20, 21) one month afterwards, when the new semester started (February 2006), followed by a final group interview with the readers at school. All of the parents of the control group children also received a guidebook at the end of the project as a gift to thank them for taking part in the programme.

During the study, I made contact via telephone with the parents and children regularly to remind them of the study and discuss issues with them. The children were constantly reminded to keep records using the designed record form (Appendices 22, 23) and record 5-7 new words or phrases they valued in their own Vocabulary Notebook (see Appendix 24) every time they finished reading, and the family reading group was reminded to complete the recordings. Every week, I checked the session recording form informally and went into Class A to introduce a new book to initiate more interest. I also tried to go to the school every day in order to remind the children about the project.

From my observation, my frequent appearance at the school seemed to heighten the curiosity of students from other classes very much. They were also asking the experimental class what we were doing and they were showing some degree of interest. Occasionally, I saw learners from the experiment class showing books from the classroom library to the learners from other classes. This was really an exciting phenomenon for me because this seemed to be a sign of the strong positive effect of my project.

4.8.2 Material

In this section, I will discuss information about the materials used for the study, namely the parents' guidebook, the book collection and a website.

4.8.2.1 Parents' guidebook

The results of pilot study of 21 parents and 34 learners showed that parents wanted training before reading and that there was a need for a guidebook to assist them in moving beyond the observed focus on translation, vocabulary and pronunciation in interaction with their children. I therefore collected relevant information and web links on family literacy, extensive reading, storybook reading, and suitable activities, and frequently asked questions and the primary English education curriculum and all were put together in a 74-page guidebook in Mandarin Chinese, hoping that the parents would develop ideas about how to read with their children, why it was important to involve them, and what activities could be used if they were not interested in the theoretical background at all. The guidebook also had a recommended book list, a list of titles of popular or classic children's storybooks suggested by other researchers. The book was originally divided into three parts: the main content, the references and the information about GGGC (see Appendix 17, table of contents). Because the

reference list was long, I decided to omit this part in the guidebook by adding a note to the parents about how to get this information in order to shorten the length of the book. I said if they needed a reference, I would prepare the copies for them, but no one asked for any. The GGGC part was separated from the main content to form a separate booklet. Although the parents in the control group did not receive a guidebook when they entered the project, they were given a copy after the project finished, as I had promised them before the study. One of the parents from the control group did contact me through email later about the information given and she said she found the book useful.

4.8.2.2 Book collection

In this study, children were asked to choose their reading by themselves (or with the parents) to comply with the spirit of extensive reading. Recommended book lists were given in the parents' guidebook (p65) but a small class library with a wide variety of genres, interests, and difficulty levels was set up in the classroom of the experimental groups. To create the library, after the pilot study, I started collecting books which were recommended by researchers, presenters at conferences, and in publications on extensive reading or L2 English reading. I spent hours reading these before I made decisions on what to include based on availability and the recommended selection criteria of good children's storybooks in chapter two, in addition to the number of words, illustration, and length of story (I will look at the book selection again in chapter five). However, the basic criteria are 'short', 'easy' and 'interesting'. Some books were donated by my family and others were recommended by local bookstores. In the end, there were seventy-nine books (twenty-one of which had tapes/CDs) provided for the experimental learners to borrow and use at any time. This amount was much larger than the amount for pilot study because, as the pilot study results indicated, participants reflected that they would like to have more books. This amount exceeded the basic ratio suggested in the literature, in Chapter Two, that it should start with at least one book for each student plus ten (29 learners : 79 books). These books ranged in level of difficulty⁵⁹ and included 44 books from different series from various publishers, as in the pilot study collection, and 35 real books (books for native learners). Samples of books at different levels from different publishers are categorised by level and given in Appendix 29. A space from their classroom shelf was devoted to the English storybooks and audio materials. There was a recording book in the classroom for them to write down their names and the book titles when they checked out a book. I made some simple rules for them to follow. Each person

⁵⁹ Due to cram school attendance variation, the class level was mixed.

could keep a book for a week at the longest. Two volunteer students were asked to arrange the books every day before school finished. See Appendix 30 for the booklist with publisher information (series title and publisher), classroom library rules and 'Nonie's reminder'. The control group was not reading and thus had no access to the book collection at the time.

Using books from a variety of series and books for both natives and non-natives caused some problems in data analysis, as we will see in Chapter Five. Firstly, as pointed out in the pilot study section, different publishers have different criteria for level in their own series (see Hill, 2006). That is, level three in one series might not be level three in another series. As a result, it was hard to tell whether one book was more difficult to read than another. Secondly, similar to the pilot study books, the vocabulary size information of the graded readers used in this study from different publishers was still unavailable. Thirdly, the information provided by the publisher was vague, e.g. 'easy words', 'basic vocabulary', 'short sentences', 'vocabulary and sentence length for beginning readers'. We could not know how difficult the books were in terms of grammar (simple or complex syntax). Lastly, books written for natives (real books) and non-natives (graded readers) will contain different words, styles, grammar, etc. to suit the needs of two different groups of learners.

4.8.2.3 Website

A website in Mandarin was established in order to facilitate communication among all experimental group participants in the project (<http://home.kimo.com.tw/noniechiang17>). Anyone could leave a message or initiate an issue for discussion at any time.

4.8.3 Instrument

Instruments used in the pilot study were refined to collect data for the main study, e.g. questionnaires, recording forms, audio-recordings and interviews, and proficiency tests. In the main study, only one questionnaire and one recording form were used. More recording equipment was made available. A set of proficiency tests was developed by the researcher. Furthermore, a vocabulary notebook was given to each learner participant to help look into how children dealt with new vocabulary. All the instruments are introduced here according to how they addresses the research questions, followed by the method of analysis.

4.8.3.1 Questionnaires

All questionnaires, letters, and notices to parents and children were in Mandarin to achieve better communication and for ecological validity (as they would be in real life). With the questionnaires there was a letter concerning the confidentiality of the information attached, informing the parents and the children that the information obtained would be used only for academic research purposes and all the names would be anonymised for the research ethics. A consent form had been given with the introduction of the programme and returned before the participants took the pre-treatment questionnaire.

In the pilot study, children and parents filled in different questionnaires, which meant there were four different sets of data. In addition, there were also different forms for them to fill in after each reading. To reduce paper work, I confined the main study questionnaires to two pages⁶⁰ and the parents and the children used the same questionnaires with a few questions directed at parents, as Day and Bamford (1998) suggested for pre- and post-programme comparison. The questions were all focused on English (L2) reading rather than on Chinese (L1) reading. The layout was better organised than on the pilot questionnaire and there were fewer open-ended questions. Most importantly, the main study questionnaire had a more narrow focus on reading attitude and reading habit/behaviour, which were the commonly studied factors of many extensive reading programmes and so were included in this current study.

The main study questionnaire consisted of 41 close-ended questions designed to obtain information in the following five categories: (1) reading attitude (12 questions in Likert Scale from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'); (2) reading behaviour/habit (20 questions in Likert Scale from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'); (3) English input at home (4 questions); (4) anticipated application problems (1 question), and (5) background information (4 questions), containing one question specifically for parents. The application problem question was designed for experiment groups only. All questions were close-ended questions and most of them were adapted from other successful published studies on reading, extensive reading and family reading, e.g. Branston and Provis (1986), Day and Bamford (1998), Smith and Elley (1998) and Smith, Shirley and Visser (1996b). See Appendices 18 and 19 for Chinese and English example questionnaires.

⁶⁰ The format and page numbers in appendices 9 and 10 are slightly different from that of the original questionnaires owing to the fact that Chinese writing is more concise in space and therefore all the questions could be fitted onto two pages.

The post-treatment questionnaire was slightly different from the pre-treatment one in that there was no third or fourth part. It included in addition participants' feedback on the programme. In the post-treatment questionnaire, the questions aimed to find out about how parents and children read, how the experiment group learners felt about the project, whether they thought they had benefited from the project, and to obtain suggestions or comments. The post-treatment questionnaire was made up of 48 questions: 12 on attitude, 20 on behaviour/habit, and 16 on application problems (3 open-ended questions and 13 close-ended ones, among which 11 were in Likert Scale from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'). See Appendices 25 and 26 for a sample.

Since the control group participants did not read during the study period at all, adjustment of the post-treatment questionnaire for control group participants in the third part, the application problem, was made to fit the situation. There were 15 questions in the application part: 13 close-ended questions and two open-ended ones, aiming at finding out how the parents and children in the control group would feel about a home English reading project, which reflected how interested they would be, how they thought the project could be carried out, how they would read together at home, whether they would like to have more information about this project, etc.⁶¹ See Appendices 27, 28. This study did not include a delayed post-treatment questionnaire because it would be only one month later than the post-test and thus the changes of the participants' responses were likely to be minor.

The data were then coded and processed using non-parametric procedures due to the following reasons: (1) Two (the Family Reading Group and the Reading Alone Group) of the three groups had less than 30 participants each; (2) The uncertainty of whether the data distribution was normal. With close-ended questions, the coding is very straightforward; each answer is assigned a value from 1 to 5 (e.g. from 'strongly disagree' = 1 to 'strongly agree' = 5). Under non-parametric procedures, the Kruskal-Wallis Test was used to examine the differences among three groups (independent samples), and the Mann-Whitney U Test was used for the comparison of two groups and post hoc tests after the Kruskal-Wallis Test. The Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-rank test was used to examine the differences between pre- and post-tests of the same (related) samples.⁶² In addition, as Dörnyei (2003:121, 129-131)

⁶¹ I did not trace control group parents' usage of the guidebooks or whether the control group children started reading after the study because I soon returned to my study in the UK for data analysis.

⁶² The Kruskal-Wallis test is similar to the one-way ANOVA in parametric analysis. The Mann-Whitney U Test is similar to independent sample T test, while the matched-pairs signed-rank test is similar to paired-sample T-test.

suggests, for attitude questionnaire data, quantitative and qualitative results should be combined (mixed-methodology designs), I intended to bring the research study to life by adding qualitative results, such as interview information, to support the statistics.

It has been recommended that in order to avoid a response set where the respondents mark only one side of a rating scale, it is worth including in the questionnaire both positively and negatively worded items (Dörnyei, 2003:107), e.g. questions 1, 8, 9, 12 in the behaviour scale. Usually, with negatively worded items the scores are reversed before analysis, followed by summing up or averaging the items addressing the same target. However, in this study, the negatively worded items were not reversed because what I want to know is their real attitude and behaviour, which can be observed from the data as it is. In addition, Dörnyei (2003:39) stresses the importance of aggregate item scores. Likert scale items that measure the same attitude can simply be summed up because they refer to the same target and it is assumed that a higher total score reflects a stronger endorsement of the target attitude. However, not every variation on Likert scales is summative. For example, in Oxford's (1990) learning strategy, the various items within a group ask about the frequency of the sum of different strategies. In this case, summing up the items would imply that the more strategies a person uses, the more developed his/her strategic skills are in the particular area. However, with regard to learning strategies this is not the case, since it is the quality rather than the quantity of the strategies a person utilizes that matters: One can be a very competent strategy user by consistently employing one single strategy that particularly suits his/her abilities and learning style. Thus, in this case, the summation of different item scores is not related linearly to the underlying trait. Based on this, my analysis of the two main variables, attitude and behaviour, will basically be item-based, especially in behaviour analysis. However, there may be a chance I need to use summative attitude scoring for clearer results and this will be specifically made explicit in the results section when such a need comes up.

Validity and Reliability

Before moving on to the next section, it is important to discuss the reliability and the validity of the questionnaire. The set of questions was used to collect data mainly on two major variables: reading attitude and reading habit/behaviour, which may be influenced positively by the treatment, thereby promoting reading and increasing proficiency (research hypotheses 1a-1c). Before data analysis, the pre-treatment questionnaires given to all participants (children and their parents in the sample) were examined for validity and reliability. The subsets of questions for reading attitude

consisted of 10 questions and those for habit/behaviour consisted of 20. Validity and reliability are the two most important criteria for assuring the quality of the data collection procedures. Validity provides information on the extent to which the procedure really measures what it is supposed to measure, and reliability provides information on the extent to which the data collection procedure elicits accurate data (Seliger & Shohamy, 2003). Multi-item questionnaires should have reliability in at least one aspect: internal consistency, which is measured by the Cronbach Alpha coefficient. Dörnyei (2003:111) suggests that internal consistency estimates for well-developed attitude scales containing as few as 10 items ought to approach 0.80. In the data, through factor analysis, two questions (No. two and No. six) were found to negatively influence the validity and reliability; thus they were excluded in quantitative analysis.⁶³

From reliability results, all the questions of the two constructs relate to one another and measure the same construct within their own category, because the Cronbach's α values are both over .80. Table 4.7 shows, from the validity value, that the data collection procedure accurately represents the variables which it measures. In short, the questionnaires showed good validity and reliability. That is, the scales test the targets (attitude and behaviour) well and collect accurate data.

Table 4.7 Validity and Reliability of questionnaire

	No. of questions	Validity	reliability
		Total variance explained (%)	Cronbach's α
Attitude	10	61.14	0.88
Habit/behaviour	20	61.55	0.85

4.8.3.2 Session recording form

To investigate the relationships between reading time and frequency and the learners' attitude, book level, and improvement, we need to know if parents and children really read, under strong encouragement and support. The reading frequency from the session form can show this. This form helped find out about how often and how long the reading had been, what books the learners had chosen, whether the story-tape (if available) was used, how they rated the book, whether the books were at the right level, how interesting the book was to them, what activities were carried out, and any additional comments or feedback.

⁶³ I realised in hindsight that I should have run a factor analysis. Here I would like to point out the importance of this step to other researchers to avoid the same mistake.

Unlike the pilot study, only the learners filled in the session recording form, which was already formatted. This decision was made with the hope of giving the child participants of a sense of achievement when they completed a reading session and to reduce the load of paperwork. The learners were encouraged to bring the form to communicate with me every week; however, there were children who never showed me the form during the study period. Unfortunately, one or two children lost their forms at some point. I sometimes wrote some feedback on the form while reviewing it, trying to encourage them. Please see Appendices 22, 23 for example pages.

4.8.3.3 Home-reading recordings

To investigate the real nature of family reading, which related to research hypothesis 3b 'parents will use interactive methods to read with their children', audio-tapes were also provided to the family reading group to record their family reading sessions. The recordings were used to study the language the participants had chosen to use, their reading method, interactions and the problems during the sessions. Although I asked them to record as much as possible, the learners were reluctant to do so, and so were the parents. I had to negotiate with them many times just to obtain one session recorded on the tape. Therefore, in most cases I only had one session from each pair of parents and children, with only one exception. This pair recorded several sessions, although sometimes the utterances were unrecognisable because of background noises and pronunciation problems.

The tapes obtained were transcribed and studied to reveal the nature of the reading and investigate whether the parents' guidebook had an influence. By comparing the interaction or activities during joint reading, I will be able to see if parents adopt activities from the guidebook. The conversation and interaction was tracked, following the above-mentioned empirical studies discussed in section 2.5.3 (e.g. Beals & De Temple, 1992; Chang & Lin, 2006; de Jong & Leseman, 2001; De Temple & Tabors, 1995; Otto & John, 1994). Although the study could have involved the investigation of parent-child interaction based on conversation analysis, I decided not to because there was not as much data as I had expected and the interaction of the parents and children - if there was any - was fixed in style.

4.8.3.4 Interviews

Interviews were carried out in two ways: first, via telephone with the parents and second, with the learners in groups at school at the end of the project.

The first telephone contact with the parents after receiving their consent form lasted 30 minutes on average for extra information about the family and the children and thus provided a general idea of what background the children were from and whether there were special needs of the children or their parents. Through the semester, constant calls (at least once a month) were made to encourage them and see if a problem existed. Most parents did not make special comments but were glad to know that their children were reading some English storybooks. The telephone interview also helped me learn what the parents thought of the guidebook. Important points from the telephone interview were noted down as data.

The consent form stated information about the interview, and then again before the interview took place, a short notice about the interviews was given to inform the parents about the interviews. The semi-structured group interviews with the reading children (interview questions in Appendix 31) were carried out at the school, with the form tutor's permission with one group a day. The data obtained from the interview was used to compare to the children's response in the questionnaires.

During the project period, I went into the school nearly every day to talk, both informally and formally, to the children. Therefore, when I expressed the desire to carry out interviews with a tape-recorder at the end of the semester, there was no apparent inhibition, since I had already established rapport with the children as a consequence of my frequent visits and informal conversations.

The interview data were transcribed to support other sources of data, i.e. questionnaires and recordings.

4.8.3.5 Vocabulary notebook

Day and Bamford (1998:33-34) summarise the results of extensive reading programmes in both second and foreign language settings. It is apparent from their summary that

Extensive reading in these programmes had beneficial results. Students increased their reading ability in the target language, developed positive attitudes toward reading, had increased motivation to read, and made gains in various aspects of proficiency in the target language, including vocabulary and writing... (Day & Bamford, 1998:33-34).

Many studies of extensive reading have shown an increase in vocabulary, which aroused my interest in knowing how children deal with vocabulary during reading. Fowle (2002) suggested that vocabulary notebooks can actively involve learners in vocabulary acquisition because the learners are usually aware of words that they have encountered and recorded in their notebooks, and at least indicates a receptive knowledge of these words. Therefore, a palm-sized notepad was given to each experimental group learner. They were told to design their own Vocabulary Notebook and record the phrases that they considered important, useful or interesting. Some samples are given in Appendix 24 for reference.

4.8.3.6 Proficiency tests

One of the most important research goals was to answer the hypotheses related to proficiency improvement, which in this study included vocabulary, sentence structure ability and morpho-syntax. After reviewing several frequently used proficiency tests mentioned in the extensive reading literature, personal contact with Hill (2005) led me to realise the unsuitability of the Edinburgh Project on Extensive Reading (EPER) (see footnote 34) Placement Test, which has been used widely in extensive reading programmes where the Placement Test was aimed for FL learners at junior secondary and above level. Although the EPER centre was involved in designing a test for primary Hong Kong learners based on the scheme there, copies were unavailable and the content did not suit this group. Several self-developed measures from the literature (Leung, 2002; Mason, 2004; Mason & Krashen, 1997; Mason & Pendergast, 1993; Rodrigo, Krashen & Gribbons, 2004; Waring & Takaki, 2003) and other factors such as test design itself, suitability and relevance to the Taiwanese curriculum, and the benefits of an extensive reading project were considered. Waring and Takaki (2003) briefly summarised some of the research design issues that are common in the body of research into vocabulary gains from reading, e.g. lack of follow-up data on the length of retention, depth of word knowledge, issues in instrumentation, and the effect of frequency of occurrence on incidental word learning. They point out the importance of a delayed post-test, of knowing whether the word is learned receptively or productively, to use the right type of test (e.g. the level of difficulty), to use several different tests and to know the type of the words learned (e.g. in terms of frequency). However, it is not easy to define 'proficiency'; hence, the measurement is difficult to design. Researchers in L2 acquisition have been trying to measure proficiency with different scales and yet we still are not sure how well these measure linguistic competence. I will not claim that what I designed for this experiment tests competence;

it is only used to standardise the participants' proficiency levels in this project.

Proficiency was measured for two aspects of language: vocabulary and grammar (including morpho-syntax) (Appendix 20, 21). The pre-test, post-test and delayed post-test were all designed in the same pattern. This study included a delayed post-test for proficiency because I wanted to see if the learners' linguistic competence has been restructured. White (1991) showed that learners' linguistic competence could be temporarily restructured, similar to Schwartz's learned linguistic knowledge (see chapter two). A written test was chosen because it is more efficient and easier to administrate. Since the children are taught to write from the beginning and the Taiwanese education system has always used paper-and-pen tests, the learners are familiar with these. This avoids the shyness factor of oral data collection as well, which might negatively impact at least on the first collection. Moreover, Young-Scholten and Ijuin (2006b) did not find a difference between written and spoken data in application of a morpho-syntax proficiency measurement. Similarly, Myles (2005:102) points out written data could avoid the problematic difficulty of interpreting and identifying verb endings using oral interlanguage data.

On the procedure followed in administration of the proficiency tests, the learners were not told about the proficiency tests beforehand, but the parents were. It was stated in the handout given to them and mentioned when I talked to them. When the tests took place, to avoid increasing the learners' anxiety, I referred them to as English exercises and told the learners that I was working on developing an English proficiency test and would like their help to see if the level was appropriate. During the testing sessions, they were not allowed to use a dictionary or talk to each other. Under the same conditions all three groups spent 35-40 minutes taking the tests. The only difference was that for the Control Group form tutors of the two classes monitored the post-test and the delayed post-test for me.⁶⁴ A cue card was given to the teachers with administration procedures and key points.

Now, let us move on to the test details.

⁶⁴ During the study period, the learners and teachers expressed eagerness to know how well they had done in the test. To stop them from asking about the grades, I told them the tests were not marked yet. The reason for doing this was that I did not want to either upset the students who did not do well or have some biased opinions about the learners or the classes. Therefore, I decided the marking was to be done at the end of the study. However, I feel it is important to mention the fact that the learners were more impatient at the third proficiency test. Some children were quite hesitant to write the answers and this might have influenced the results.

Vocabulary: Giving translations or definitions

Since in this project, the learners read different books according to their own level and interest, they were all reading different books and, to my knowledge, there are very few tests designed for an uncontrolled vocabulary for young learners. Some examples of the ones that do exist are '*British Picture Vocabulary Tests*' (Dunn, Dunn, Whetton & Pintile, 1982) and 'Series of plates for the English picture vocabulary test' by Brimer and Dunn (1962; 1973). After examining the vocabulary of these, I found a discrepancy between the 'vocabulary of the booklet and that of the Taiwanese primary learners' needs and likely exposure to many of these words. To associate the test with the Taiwanese curriculum was also one of the key points and therefore after a long consideration, I decided to develop my own proficiency test battery.

Vocabulary gain can be tested in many ways (see Waring & Takaki, 2003 for more information on issues of vocabulary testing). Most studies looking at gains from context when reading extensively have used a multiple-choice test (Waring & Takaki, 2003:133), but to avoid random guessing, a meaning (translation) test was used in this study, i.e. the participants wrote the translated meaning in Mandarin. The words were from the 1,200 basic wordlist of the 2,000-word Vocabulary List published with the GGC by the Taiwanese MOE. In my design, there were forty words in each test (pre-, post- and delayed post-tests), including twenty more difficult words (less answered correctly) and twenty easier words (more answered correctly). The number of forty was recommended by two of my former students, who have been practising teachers for more than five years. The more difficult words appeared in each test, whereas the group of easier words changed in each test. 240 randomly selected words from the wordlist were first tested so that I could remove the words at the extremes of difficulty. 140 fifth-graders from four classes (class size = 35 learners) took this pilot vocabulary test. A range from zero to 35 correct showed on the answer list. Through careful calculating using estimated points on the 100-point scale, i.e. 2.5 points for each correct answer, I was able to design a vocabulary test which could be used in a mixed level class. I then obtained two sets of words. The first set included 20 'more difficult words', which were only answered 18-20 times correctly among 35 students, and this set was used in all three tests. The second set had 62 words to be evenly distributed in the three tests. These words were answered 21-32 times correctly among 35, and thus named 'easier words'. These words were distributed into three tests randomly but evenly according to their percentage of being answered correctly and then converted into estimated scores. The estimated score for the more difficult word group was 27.07 and 37.14 out of 100 for the easier word group, with a total of 64.21 out of 100 and

this estimated score remained the same in the three tests. This estimated score was set because I wanted to avoid the situation of students scoring too high or too low. The score could not be set too high or low, so that there will be a space to show improvement or decrease when the scores of pre-test, post-test and delayed post-test were compared. Two words (there were 62 in the beginning) from the easier wordlist were discarded in the end to keep the estimated scores of three tests equal. Therefore, a total of 80 words was used in the three tests. Appendix 20 has the full version of the vocabulary test, with the more difficult words italicised. (The group was not italicised in the original test sheet.) The tests administered had instructions in Mandarin. The translated English version is in Appendix 21 for reference.

The use of curriculum vocabulary for testing in this study could result in one problem. If the learners were not exposed to the chosen words in their reading, it was unlikely that they would learn the words. Using words from the curricular vocabulary list, the results would be based on the words tested appearing frequently in the books that they read. However, this is an inevitable problem of anyone testing the vocabulary of children who have read extensively. My decision to use the syllabus vocabulary test was based on what the learners were expected to be improving in school, and it is outside the scope of my thesis to do a frequency analysis of the words in all of the books that were made available to the participants. Nonetheless, a comparison of the vocabulary in a small selection of books and the curriculum vocabulary list will be included in chapter five to see whether the difference exists.

As mentioned in chapter three, the Taiwanese curriculum is also based on high frequency wordlists, which often generate various sight word reading lists. Since the Taiwanese curriculum does not give a list of these words, a list compiled by the Primary English teaching committee of KeeLung City was used (English Teaching Resource Website of KeeLung City, 2008). The list contained two levels (for grades 3-4 and 5-6) and two types of words (sight words and basic words). In this study, I used the sight words for grades 5-6 because the participants in the study were fifth graders. There should be 300 basic words in the list (Appendix 41). According to the list, learners should have 300 words for recognition (including sight words and words that should be able to sound out from the spelling), and spell and use 224 words (words for production) from the list.

On the test, for data quantification, one point was awarded for each correct answer, which included answers with similar meaning or another meaning acceptable in the dictionary, and meanings from different parts of speech. The top score was 40. For

example, 'excellent' means 'of the highest or finest quality' or 'best'. If the learners wrote 'good' or 'very good', they also got one point. For 'he/him/his', they would get one point if they wrote the translation of either 'him', 'him' or 'his'. 'Left' could mean the direction as in 'left or right', or the past tense of *leave*; either answer would get one point, and so did 'fly' as in the verb (move through the air with wings) or as in the noun (an insect with two wings). Percentage of correct answers is used for descriptive and inferential analysis.

Before we look at proficiency tests, we need to consider how L1 Mandarin speakers acquire L2 English.

Learners' L1: Mandarin Chinese⁶⁵

Researchers have argued that L2 learners may start with L1 grammatical representations in whole or in part, e.g. Schwartz and Sprouse (1996), Eubank (1996), Vainikka and Young-Scholten (1996a; 1996b) and Hawkins (2001); that is, there is possible transfer of learners' L1 to their L2, and thus we need to have some knowledge of the learners' L1, Mandarin, to investigate their proficiency.

Mandarin Chinese has very little morphological complexity when compared to other languages (Huang, 1999; Li & Thompson, 1981; Yip & Rimmington, 1997). That is, a typical Chinese word is not made up of component parts, called morphemes, but is, rather, a single morpheme. Thus, it has been referred to as an isolating language, a language in which it is generally true that each word consists of just one morpheme and cannot be further analysed into component parts. It uses very few markers, e.g. case marker, number markers, tense marker, etc., as many other languages do. For example, many languages (e.g. English, Turkish) have morphemes (case markers) that signal the grammatical function the noun has in the sentence: subject, direct object, indirect object, and adverb, and so on. In Mandarin, this is generally expressed by means of word order and prepositions. In many languages, it is obligatory to mark nouns for a singular/plural distinction, as in the English *cow/cows*; whereas in Mandarin, the category of number is not a necessary one. *Shu* can refer to either 'book' or 'books'. If the concept of plurality is expressed in Mandarin, it is typically expressed by a separate word, such as *yixie* 'some', or *xuduo* 'many', and involves no morphological complexity within a word. Some languages also mark verbs morphologically to agree with the noun class into which the subject or direct object falls. This agreement usually indicates the person and number of the subject (or

⁶⁵ I will use Chinese and Mandarin interchangeably to refer to Mandarin Chinese in this thesis.

object). English also has morphemes for signalling the time of a reported event relative to the time of speaking (tense) or the duration or completion of a reported event relative to other events (aspect), as in the following sentences:

- (4) a. I am walk – ing. (present tense, progressive aspect)
b. I walk – ed. (past tense)

However, Mandarin has no markers for tense, though it does have aspect morphemes, including:

- (5) -le ‘perfective’
Ta shui le sangezhuengtou.
He sleep perfective three hours
‘He has slept for three hours.’

- guo ‘experienced action’
Wo shuaiduan guo tuei.
I break experienced action leg
‘I broke my leg.’

- zhe ‘durative’
Ta na zhe liangbenshu.
He carry durative two books
‘He is carrying two books.’

In English, for example, the verb ‘to eat’ has many forms compared to its Mandarin equivalent: ‘to eat’ (infinitive), ‘eat, eats’ (present), ‘ate’, (simple past), ‘eaten’ (past participle), ‘eating’ (present participle), etc. Chinese only has one basic form, used for every person and tense; thus *chi* ‘eat’ can equal all these forms (*ta chi* ‘he eats’, *ni chi* ‘you eat’, etc.). However, Chinese does not express these differences through inflectional suffixes. The simplest way of expressing past tense is to use adverbs such as ‘yesterday’. For example: *zuotian wo chi ji* (yesterday I eat chicken) is equal to saying ‘Yesterday I ate chicken’. Another way of expressing past tense is to use the aspect particles ‘*guo*’ or ‘*le*’, which cannot stand by themselves but can express completed actions when placed after verbs. Past tense in Chinese can also be expressed by surrounding the verb and direct object with the words ‘*shi...de*’. For example *wo shi zuotian chi ji de* (It was yesterday that I ate chicken). This phrasing emphasizes the time in which the action took place more than the action itself (Huang,

1999; Li & Thompson, 1981; Yip & Rimmington, 1997).

Greenberg (1963) classified the world languages into three main groups regarding the order of the verb and the nouns in a simple sentence: given a simple transitive sentence with a subject and a direct object, then the verb can occur before both the subject and the direct object, between them, or after them both. Since in the vast majority of languages the subject comes before the object, we can represent these three basic word-order types in a simple way as: VSO, SVO and SOV. Thus, for example, a language in which the typical word order for most sentences is to have the verb at the end would be an SOV, or verb-final, language. Japanese is such a language, since sentences such as the following are the norm:

(6) John ga hon o kaita
 John topic book wrote
 'John wrote a book'.

By the same token, one can state that English is an SVO language, in which the verb typically follows the subject and precedes the object, as in 'John wrote a book' (Greenberg, 1963; Li & Thompson, 1981). Mandarin features Subject-Verb-Object word order among the three groups, much like English. Thus the sentence: *wou ai ni* (I love you) has exact equivalents in the English sentence (*wo* 'I', *ai* 'love', *ni* 'you'). Because Mandarin and English are both SVO languages, when an L2 learner produces a sentence, it is harder for researchers to know and decide the learner's level of proficiency. When L1 and L2 have the same word order, it is always more difficult to judge whether the production was a direct translation from L1 or a grammatical L2 sentence.

Nonetheless, Mandarin is not an easy language to classify in terms of word order (Huang, 1999; Li & Thompson, 1981). For instance, according to Greenberg's word-order typology (Greenberg, 1963), the order of the verb and the direct object tends to correlate with the order of modified element and modifying element in the following way: (a) If the direct object follows the verb then modifiers of the nouns tend to follow the noun and modifiers of the verb tend to follow the verb. And conversely: (b) if the object precedes the verb then modifiers of the noun tend to precede the noun and modifiers of the verb tend to precede the verb. That is, the order of all types of modifiers in relation to their heads (the words they modify) follows the same order as that of the verb and its direct object. Thus, the English sentence 'John met Mary in Tokyo', where the object follows the verb, the adverbial phrase *in Tokyo*

also follows the verb. In addition to the principle regarding modifiers and heads, Greenberg shows that a number of other features tend to correlate with the relative position of verb and object. These correlations are summarised in the following table.

Table 4.8 Features that correlate with the relative position of verb and object (Li & Thompson, 1981:18)

VO languages	OV languages
Head/Modifier	Modifier/Head
Verb/Adverb	Adverb/Verb
Noun/Adjective ¹	Adjective/Noun
Noun/Relative Clause	Relative Clause/Noun
Noun/Possessive ² ('of the box')	Possessive/Noun
Other correlations	
Auxiliary/Verb ('can', 'have')	Verb/Auxiliary
Preposition/Noun	Noun/Postposition ³
No sentence-final question particle	Sentence-final question particle

1. English is an exception with respect to this correlation, since adjectives regularly precede the noun, as in *bumpy road*.
2. English is also a partial exception to this correlation in that, in general, possessives follow the head in a construction with an inanimate possessor, as in: 'the corner of the box', but precede it in a construction with an animate possessor, as in 'the boy's box'.
3. A *postposition* in an OV language may be a case suffix, or it may signal the same kinds of semantic relationships as do prepositions in VO languages, namely, location, possession, direction, and the like.

In Li and Thompson's (1981:23-26) analysis following Greenberg's criteria, Mandarin can be seen to have some of the features of an SOV language and some of those of an SVO language, with more of the former than of the latter. Let us start from the examples illustrating the SVO features: (i) SVO sentences occur, as in (7); (ii) Prepositions exist, as in (8); (iii) Auxiliaries precede then V, as in (9); and (iv) Complex sentences are almost always SVO, as in (10).

- (7)

Wo
xihuan
ta.

I
like
3sg

'I like him/her.'
- (8)

Ta
cong
Zhongguo
lai
le

3sg
from
China
come
currently relevant state (CRS)

'S/he has come from China.'
- (9)

Ta
neng
shuo
Zhongguo
hua

3sg
can
speak
China
speech

'S/he can speak Chinese.'

- (10) Wo tingshuo ni mai le ta de shu dian
 I hear you buy perfect aspect (PFV) 3sg genitive book store
 ‘I heard that you bought his/her bookstore.’

Example sentences illustrating each of the SOV features are: (i) SOV sentences occur, as in (11); (ii) Prepositional phrases precede the V, and postpositions exist, as in (12); (iii) Relative clauses precede the head noun, and genitive phrases precede the head noun as in (13); (iv) Aspect markers follow the V; and (v) Certain adverbials precede the verb as in (15).

- (11) Zhangsan ba ta ma le
 Zhangsan BA 3sg scold PFV/CRS
 ‘Zhangsan scolded him/her.’
- (12) Ta zai chufang li chao fan
 3sg at kitchen in fry rice
 ‘S/he’s frying rice in the kitchen.’
- (13) Hui jiang guoyu de nei ge xiaohai shi wo de erzi
 know speak Chinese nominalizer that classifier child be I genitive son
 ‘The child who knows how to speak Chinese is my son.’
- (14) Wo qu guo Taibei
 I go experiential aspect Taipei
 ‘I have been to Taipei.’
- (15) Ta man bu zaihu
 3sg completely not care
 ‘S/he is completely indifferent.’

Thus, they argue that Mandarin is a language that has many SVO features as well as many SOV features.

Negation of Chinese verbs is accomplished by inserting *bu*, which can be interpreted roughly as ‘not’, before the verb to be negated. For example: *wo bu chi ji* (I not eat chicken) is equal to saying ‘I don’t eat chicken’. Serial verbs and verbal complements complicate matters. There is one exception to this rule, however. The verb *you* (to have) is negated with the particle *mei*. The past negative is made by use of *mei you* instead of *bu*. For example: *wo mei you chi ji* (‘I did not eat chicken’).

Two of the principal types of question formation are illustrated by English and Chinese (Hawkins, 2001:148-150). In English, copula *be*, auxiliary *be/have*, modal verbs and expletive *do* move to the front of the sentence in yes/no questions. In

wh-questions, additionally a *wh*-phrase moves to the front. In Chinese, by contrast, yes/no questions are formed by the introduction into a clause-final position of an overt question marker, *ma*, as in example (16a). *Wh*-questions are formed by inserting a *wh*-phrase (e.g. *shenme*, ‘what’; *shei*, ‘who’) into the position where an ordinary constituent would occur in a declarative clause, as in example (16b) (examples from Aoun & Li, 1993):

- (16) a. Ta lai ma?
 He come Q?
 ‘Is he coming?’
- b. Zhangsan kandao shenme?
 Zhangsan saw what?
 ‘What did Zhangsan see?’

Another very striking feature of Mandarin sentence structure is that it includes the element ‘topic’ (Li & Thompson, 1981). Because of the importance of ‘topic’ in Chinese grammar, it can be termed a topic-prominent language. The topic of a sentence is what the sentence is about; it always comes first in the sentence. It refers to something about which the speaker assumes the listener has some knowledge, as in the following example:

- (17) Zhangsan wo yijing jian guo le.
 zhangsan I already see experiential aspect CRS
 ‘Zhangsan, I’ve already seen (him).’
- (18) Shei ke shu yezi hen da
 this classifier tree leaf very big
 ‘This tree, (its) leaves are very big.’

What distinguishes the topic from the subject is that the subject must always have a direct semantic relationship with the verb as the one that performs the action or exists in the state named by the verb, but the topic need not. Looking again at the above examples, we can see that they both have subjects in addition to their topics: the subject in (17), the one who does the seeing, is *wo* ‘I’, while the subject in (18), the one that is very big, is *yezi* ‘leaf’. The topic need not have this kind of direct semantic relationship with the verb. In contrast, nearly all English sentences must have a subject, and the subject is easy to identify in an English sentence, since it typically occurs immediately before the verb and the verb agrees with it in number.

- (19) a. That guy has money.
 b. Those guys have money.

In Mandarin, the concept of subject seems to be less significant, while the concept of topic appears to be quite crucial in explaining the structure of ordinary sentences in the language. The subject is not marked by position, by agreement, or by any case marker, and, in fact, in ordinary conversation, the subject may be missing altogether (null subject, see Hawkins, 2001:209-220), as the examples (20) and (21):

(20) Zuotian nian le liang ge zhongtou de shu
 Yesterday read PFV two classifier hour genitive book
 ‘Yesterday, (I) read for two hours.’

(21) Hao leng a
 very cold reduce forcefulness
 ‘(It’s) very cold.’

Both the one who did the reading in (20) and what it is that is cold in (21) are inferred from the context, but do not need to be expressed syntactically by subjects, as they do in English.

In summary, Chinese and English have a lot in common in terms of syntax; therefore, a production of a Chinese learner of English, e.g. a statement like ‘I like your pants’ could be a direct translation from the Chinese equivalent in (22) and be syntactically well-formed.

(22) Wo xihuan ni de kuzi.
 I like you genitive pants
 ‘I like your pants’.

However, learners might have problems when numbers, cases or agreements are involved. For instance, if a learner wants to say ‘I thought he was tired’ via L1 transfer, the sentence may look like (23), missing the tense, agreement, and copula *be*, which is ill-formed.

- (23) *I thought he tired.
 Chinese equivalent: wo yiwei ta lei le
 'I thought he was tired.'

While studying the learners' interlanguage, researchers need to carefully judge the production based on these features of Mandarin.

Jumbled sentences: Putting the words in the correct order to form a sentence

One of the benefits mentioned previously of extensive reading programmes was gains in general linguistic competence (Elley & Mangubhai, 1981; Hafiz & Tudor, 1989; Janopoulos, 1986; Tudor & Hafiz, 1989). To demonstrate this, the second part of the proficiency test was sentence reconstruction, where children are asked to demonstrate how words should be strung together. Seven jumbled sentences were given on the test sheet. Because they might have used formulaic-based knowledge, I asked them to order the elements/words of the sentences by filling in the blanks in the sentences with numbers assigned to each of the words. Although this task is commonly used in Taiwan, I still demonstrated with one example before the pre-test, to ensure the participants were able to complete the task. These sentence types are also basic textbook sentences. The following example was given to the learners on the test sheet for demonstration.

Example: is usually She busy very at weekend the
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

3 _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

(Ans: 3 1 2 5 4 6 8 7.)

In order to initiate their responses, the first word of every question was given. The order and structure of the seven sentences were the same at all three test times; I only replaced some of the words in the sentences. There were five sentences in present tense (three affirmatives/declarations, one imperative and one interrogative) and two in past tense (one affirmative and one interrogative). The total of the blanks in the three tests were forty, thirty-seven and thirty-six, respectively. Please see appendices 20 and 21.

Regarding tests in extensive reading programmes, the cloze test is widely used (e.g. Mason & Pendergast, 1993), where learners must restore words which have been

deleted from a text. Although there have been arguments for or against the cloze procedure over the years in terms of its validity and reliability, Alderson (1996) argued that the cloze test to be a more integrated and global approach because it is difficult to say what exactly is being tested by the cloze test as a whole. If enough gaps are created, a variety of different skills and aspects of language use will be involved. Therefore, a cloze test can be said to measure anything depending on which words are deleted. Yuan (2002) investigated how 47 test-takers filled in the blanks in a fixed-ratio cloze test through think-aloud protocols and interviews. The results showed that the subjects tended to read either at too low a level or too high a level, and they in general had problems switching between different levels. In addition, the same blank can be filled successfully by using different levels (or more than one level) since readers follow different paths to comprehension. The study indicated that in a cloze test deletion sometimes makes the sentence structurally ambiguous, thus changing the text. Consequently, meaning is not restored to the original when the blank is filled in, but is instead created uniquely in the interaction between each reader and the mutilated text. Although the cloze procedure seems to be an effective measure of overall language proficiency, my concern was that learners might leave the deletions blank. Thus, a jumbled sentence task was chosen to provide learners clues to answers and a higher sense of confidence while answering. This reduced the possibility of not answering, in addition to providing more information on random guessing and their construction of sentence elements. This type of exercise is also common in Taiwanese education and learners are familiar with it. Although learners may use learned knowledge of grammar to (see Krashen, 1995; Schwartz, 1993) accomplish the task, it is acceptable in this study because the purpose of this task was to identify the learners' levels.

For analysis purposes, one point was awarded for each correct blank. Some sentences had two possible orders. For sentence 1 in the pre-test, we could say either 'Please give me a hamburger and some juice' or 'Please give me some juice and a hamburger'. In sentence 2, one can say 'Peter had a banana and milk for lunch' or 'Peter had milk and a banana for lunch', whereas in sentence no. 3, both 'Clara always goes to bed early' and 'Clara goes to bed early always' are possible. In these cases, one point was given to one blank with a correct (possible) answer. The correct sentence number, correct answers, blanks, accuracy rate were then counted for analysis.

Picture description: Describing the picture in English

The third part of the morpho-syntactic measurement was a picture description task. Although the literature pointed me in the direction of testing vocabulary and grammatical accuracy, I decided to include a picture description test to collect qualitative data to investigate their linguistic competence. Considering the participants might be nervous in an oral test, I decided to collect written data. As noted above, these considerations were pointed out in Young-Scholten and Vainikka (2005). Indeed, participants may have more time to plan their sentences while writing than speaking and thus may draw on learned knowledge.

Certainly when writing, the test subject may have more time to plan production than would be the case when speaking, and s/he might therefore be expected to use constructions or forms not part of his/her linguistic competence. Here the question of whether a given construction or form is part of the learner's linguistic competence becomes methodological (Young-Scholten & Vainikka, 2005).

They go on to say that this is also a matter of data analysis.

In an Organic Grammar-based analysis of a sample, use of multiple criteria and a productivity metric can override the effect of the learner's production of constructions that may have been memorised (see also Young-Scholten & Vainikka, 2005; Young-Scholten & Ijuin, 2006a).

Another reason for choosing picture description is similar to Myles' (2005) choice of narrative. This involves the construction of a story around key words including actions, which will typically include verbs. Myles found that in tasks in which learners had to give information, single-word or single phrase answers were often pragmatically adequate. Such tasks therefore did not lend themselves to the study of emergent syntactic structure, and the verb phrase in particular. To avoid confronting the problem vocabulary; the pictures chosen included basic vocabulary, e.g. nouns, like *books*, *people*, *TV* on daily and school life, and verbs like *sleep*, *watch*, *say*, *write* etc. To initiate their writing, a few phrases were suggested in the post- and delayed post-tests, e.g. *There is/are....; It is ...o'clock/morning.....; They are; He/She is.....*

The analysis of this task was more involved. First counted was the number of sentences, then word number, average sentence length, the frequency of using

Mandarin, number of simple sentences, complex sentences and compound sentences. Then, the Organic Grammar criteria shown in Table 4.9 were applied.

Under Organic Grammar, inflectional morphology emerges in connection with syntax, where the developmental process of increasing morphological variety and complexity is shown and parallels increasing syntactic complexity in the target language (Young-Scholten, Ijuin & Vainikka, 2005).⁶⁶

Table 4.9 Organic Grammar: Criteria for stages in L2 English

Stage	<i>word order in declaratives</i>	<i>types of verbs</i>	<i>verbal agreement; tense marking</i>	<i>pronouns</i>	<i>complex syntax</i>
1	initially resembles that of the NL	thematic (main) verbs only	none	pronouns absent	None
2	resembles the TL	thematic verbs; copula 'is' appears	none	pronoun forms begin to emerge	formulaic or intonation-based Qs
3	resembles the TL	thematic verbs, modals; copula forms beyond 'is'	no agreement; some tense, some aspect, but not productive	more pronoun forms, but they can still be missing	Qs formulaic or w/o inversion; conjoined clauses
4	resembles the TL	thematic verbs, modals, copula forms beyond 'is'; range of auxiliaries emerges	productive tense, aspect; some agreement, esp. forms w/ 'be'	pronouns obligatory, 'there' and existential 'it' emerge	productive Qs, but may still lack inversion; simple subordination
5	resembles the TL	complex tense, aspect forms; passives; range of thematic verbs, modals, auxiliaries	forms usually correct, apart from those newly attempted	use of 'there' and 'it' beyond stock phrases	all Qs with inversion; complex subordination

(Young-Scholten et al., 2005)

Young-Scholten *et al.* (2005) and Myles (2005) note that beginning L2 learners in both naturalistic and instructed contexts first produce verb-less or single word utterances. Stage 0 is much like the child’s one-word stage; however little can be said regarding syntax or morphology. For example: the learners might produce something like this:

⁶⁶ The Rapid Profile (RP) is a similar L2 assessment tool, based on Pienemann et al.’s (1988) study of German. Both RP- and OG-based assessment assume for all learners of a given second language a common path of development, marked by progression through well-defined stages. Development is marked by emergence of complexity rather than simply disappearance of non-target structure. Stages of both are implicational, where arrival at stage Y implies passage through stage X (see also Andersen, 1978; Hawkins, 2001:46-48). There are, however, important differences between them. First stages of OG include both morphological and syntactic criteria. Secondly, RP requires oral samples, assessor training and special equipment (Young-Scholten & Ijuin, 2006a).

Stage 0: *Bicycle.*
 One boy. (Young-Scholten & Ijuin, 2006a)

Stage 1 is characterised by the production of multiword utterances, along the lines of the young child's two-word and 'telegraphic' stages, where grammatical morphemes are still largely absent. Under OG, this stage is also referred to as the 'minimal tree', and may involve a second sub-stage when the learners' native language basic word order within the VP (e.g. object – verb vs. verb-object) does not match that of the target language VP. At both sub-stages, the learners might produce non-finite forms, either bare forms or participles. For example:

Stage 1a: Japanese object-verb (OV) order

bread eat

bananas eating (data from Yamada-Yamamoto 1993, cited in
 Young-Scholten *et al.*, 2005)

Stage 1b: English verb-object (VO) order

eating banana

wash your hand

(The Chinese equivalent)

 Chi xiangjiao

 Eat banana

 '*Eat banana*'

 Xi nide shou

 Wash your hand

 '*Wash your hand*'

After the learner's initial reliance on his/her native language, the inflectional morphology and syntax of the target language begin to develop, following a common order for all learners of a given language. The learner produces target language word order, but with very little inflection, if any. For example:

Stage 2: *This is car.*

You may car hit here teacher. (Young-Scholten & Ijuin, 2006b)

L2 learners, especially instructed ones, at this VP stage may also produce longer memorised (unanalysed/formulaic) chunks such as *My name is X* (see Myles, 2004). It is important not to count such utterances when arriving at stage of development.

From stage 3, more consistent appearance of inflection is observed. Learners proceed by adding more complex functional. At stage 3, functional morphology expands (e.g., auxiliaries); syntactic complexity starts to develop (sometimes at the expense of morphology, as in the second example where ‘it’ and ‘is’ are absent).

Stage 3: The initial functional syntax stage

<i>The woman is cry.</i>	auxiliary, without -ing
<i>Because too bad.</i>	Subordinating conjunction, without a verb

(Young-Scholten & Ijuin, 2006b)

At stage 4, additional functional morphology emerges along with simple subordination involving relative clauses and complementiser clauses, but without *that*. Such subordinate clauses are adjuncts whose absence does not result in an ungrammatical sentence. Examples are as follows:

Stage 4: Elaborated functional syntax stage

<i>Someone’s die because he have accident.</i>	Present perfect, -ed missing
	Productive simple subordination
<i>Car hit the kid that’s lie down on the street.</i>	Progressive, -ing missing
	Subject relative clause

(Young-Scholten et al., 2005)

Finally, at stage 5, there is a range of productive functional morphology and complex syntax, including purpose clauses (adjuncts with complex internal structure), as well as complementiser clauses with *that* and clauses following *seem*. The latter two subordinate clause types are arguments of a higher verb (e.g. *He thinks that...*) whose absence results in an ungrammatical sentence. Passives are included at this stage, as they imply displacement; the object is found in initial position. Stage 5 also includes wh-object questions such as *What did you see?* and yes/no questions with target-like inversion, e.g. *Does he like that?*⁶⁷

⁶⁷ In Mandarin-influenced English, learners are likely to have problems with tenses. The untargetlike production from learners might be similar to the following examples: *What you see? *What you saw? *what does you saw? *What do you saw? *Does he likes that? Or *Do he like that?

Stage 5: Target-like functional syntax

The young boy was having fun with his bike.

Past progressive

When you reverse, you have to see anybody behind.

Complex subordination

He doesn't did that.

Variety of forms of *do*,

Confusion of

tense/non-finite forms

(Young-Scholten et al., 2005)

The application of these stages to the assessment of any L2 learners is the idea that development of inflectional morphology parallels the development of the syntax associated with that morphology. The learners' OG levels before and after the experiments were compared to see if they make progress.

The components of the proficiency tests were quantified and analysed for descriptive and inferential analysis under non-parametric procedures. Improvement in proficiency was first tested. The composition of those learners who completed three picture descriptions were then studied for morpho-syntactic improvement using Organic Grammar criteria (Young-Scholten *et al.*, 2005; Young-Scholten & Ijuin, 2006a; 2006b). Then, to answer research hypothesis nine, the relationships between reading frequency, attitude and behaviour were investigated.

In this chapter, I will present results based on the hypotheses presented in chapter four. Due to the complex nature of this study, data from different sources (questionnaires, interviews, recordings and tests) are used complementarily. On questionnaire questions (research sub-questions, section 4.2), only those which address my research questions will be used for analysis. Despite the potential value of the data collected, not all the information is included in this thesis; for instance, as I am only interested in the children's and their parents' attitude and to what extent these affected my study, only data relating to these questions are considered. The following analysis will only include those which directly answer the research hypotheses, although an extensive statistical analysis was carried out on all the data. The three major sections (the questionnaire results, the family reading interaction results and the analysis of the proficiency data) follow the logic of the research hypotheses.

5.1 Hypothesis 1: Home English extensive reading has a positive influence on the learners' attitude and changes behaviour.

5.1.1 Hypothesis 1a: Home extensive reading has a positive effect on reading participants' (family readers and independent readers) attitude towards English reading.

Many ER programmes have suggested that there is a positive influence on the participants' attitude; this hypothesis predicts a positive effect on the children's and the parents' attitude. The 10 questions on reading attitude used a Likert scale (see 4.8.3.1 for questionnaires components and scoring) from 1 (least agree) to 5 (most agree).

First, we will consider differences among groups before the treatment, and then, following the tables, discuss the post-treatment differences.

The mean of each question is listed in Table 5.1 and Table 5.2. The mean value of each question shows the group tendency toward the question. If the mean is higher than 3, the group tends to agree with the statement and vice versa. The pre-treatment results showed that children generally acknowledged the importance of reading (Q1), felt happy when they read in English (Q7), liked reading English storybooks (Q9) and thought that reading English storybooks was an interesting way of learning English

(Q12).⁶⁸

However, on pre-test, they did not show strong opinions about their confidence in their English (Q3), did not feel nervous when they read in English (Q4), did not think reading in English is difficult (Q5), generally understood the content (Q8), read in English because they wanted to (Q10) or in order to find information (Q11).

The Kruskal-Wallis Test (similar to ANOVA in parametric procedures) was used to examine group differences on each question, in order to see if there is a group difference before treatment. In the pre-treatment questionnaire, significant group differences only existed in Q7 ($p=.012$) and Q9 ($p=.027$). The Mann-Whitney U Test was used for further analysis to find where the difference was. On Q7 (You feel happy when you read in English), both the family reading group (family readers) and reading alone Group (alone/independent readers) significantly scored higher than the control group (family: $p=.049$, independent: $p=.008$). On Q9 (You like reading English storybooks), independent readers outperformed control group readers ($p=.015$). However, this situation is difficult to avoid because the choice of groups were decided by the participants themselves (see section 4.7).

Table 5.1 Group means of children’s attitude in pre-/post treatment questionnaires – strong agreement

Child – Attitude		family reading (N=11)				reading alone (N=18)				control (N=34)			
Questions		Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD
1. reading is important	Pre	3	5	4.45	0.82	3	5	4.17	0.92	3	5	4.18	0.72
	Post	2	5	4.64	0.92	3	5	4.56	0.78	2	5	3.97	0.87
	Post	2	5	3.64	0.92	3	5	3.94	0.87	1	5	3.29	1.27
7. happy when read in English	Pre	3	5	3.91 ^{G*}	0.70	2	5	4.11 ^{G*}	1.02	1	5	3.12	1.30
	Post	1	5	3.73	1.27	3	5	3.94	0.94	1	5	3.29	1.24
	Post	1	5	3.36	1.03	1	5	3.39	1.20	1	5	3.09	0.90
9. like reading English storybooks	Pre	3	5	3.73	0.79	3	5	3.89 ^{G*}	0.90	1	5	3.12	1.07
	Post	2	5	3.73	1.01	3	5	4.00	0.84	1	5	3.00	1.26
12. reading storybooks is a fun way	Pre	2	5	4.27	1.10	3	5	4.44	0.70	2	5	3.76	1.10
	Post	2	5	3.73	1.10	3	5	4.22	0.88	1	5	3.35*	1.28

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.
G* Group difference before the treatment, significant at the .05 level

⁶⁸ Question numbers represent the order in which they appeared on the questionnaire.

Table 5.2 Group means of children’s attitude in pre-/post treatment questionnaires – average opinion

Child – Attitude		family reading (N=11)				reading alone (N=18)				control (N=34)			
Questions		Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD
3. confident in English	Pre	2	5	3.36	0.81	1	5	3.61	1.24	1	5	3.15	1.18
	Post	3	5	3.36	0.67	2	5	3.83	1.04	1	5	3.12	1.09
4. not nervous when read in English	Pre	1	5	3.55	1.04	1	5	3.50	1.10	1	5	3.44	1.11
	Post	2	5	3.55	0.93	1	5	3.83	1.10	1	5	3.21	1.12
5. not consider English reading hard	Pre	2	5	3.91	1.04	1	5	3.50	1.29	1	5	3.15	1.33
	Post	2	5	3.64	0.92	3	5	3.94	0.87	1	5	3.29	1.27
8. generally understand the content	Pre	3	5	4.09	0.83	1	5	3.56	1.42	1	5	3.68	1.20
	Post	3	5	3.91	0.83	1	5	4.11	1.13	1	5	3.35	1.30
10. read in English on one’s own will	Pre	2	5	3.55	0.82	1	5	3.83	1.20	1	5	3.24	1.26
	Post	1	5	3.55	1.21	3	5	4.00	0.91	1	5	3.00	1.18
11. read to find information	Pre	1	5	3.00	0.89	1	5	3.56	1.34	1	5	3.15	1.02
	Post	1	5	3.36	1.03	1	5	3.39	1.20	1	5	3.09	0.90

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.
G* Group difference before the treatment, significant at the .05 level

When comparing the results of pre- and post-tests (using the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test), children generally scored higher in the post-treatment questionnaire than the pre-treatment questionnaire (p=.000). A comparison on group level also revealed the same results (family: p=.003; Alone: p=.000; control: p=.000). It is surprising to see that the control group also scored significantly higher in the post-treatment questionnaire than in the pre-treatment question because they were not involved during the programme. A possible explanation is that the interest of the control group participants was initiated by the experimental group participants and thus developed better attitude in the post-treatment questionnaire.⁶⁹

In short, the data from the children support hypothesis 1a. The child participants started with a similar level of positive attitude and their attitude improved significantly after the treatment. Now, let’s turn to the parent data.

On the parental side, the descriptive results of the pre-/post-treatment attitude

⁶⁹ Scores for most questions were not significantly different between the pre- and post-treatment results. However, Q12 (reading storybooks is a fun way to learn English) responses were significantly lower in the post-treatment score than in the pre-treatment score. Further analysis showed that there was no significant difference for the pre- and post-treatment scores of family reading group and independent reading group. The difference came from the control group; the score was significantly lower in the post-treatment questionnaire than in the pre-treatment questionnaire (p=.025). This finding seemed rather strange. Learners who had not been involved in this programme should have had no experience to draw on, yet somehow expressed negative opinions on this. Unfortunately, no further qualitative data were collected regarding this at the time of study and thus I cannot provide an explanation.

questions are listed in Table 5.3. In the pre-treatment questionnaire, parents generally scored lower than the children on each question. They specifically acknowledged the importance of reading (Q1), as the means of all groups are higher than 4.5 out of a maximum 5. The two experimental groups also considered reading storybooks as a fun way of learning more than the control group (Q12) and they read in order to find information (Q11) before the treatment.

However, the parents had no strong opinions about the other questions, as shown by their mean scores, which were mostly around three.

The Kruskal-Wallis Test was used to see if the groups were equal (no significant difference) before the programme. No significant difference was found on group level, except Q12 ($p=.017$). The Mann-Whitney U Test revealed that the parents of both independent readers ($p=.040$) and family readers ($p=.012$) thought that this way of learning was more fun than the control group parents did. This may be an effect of merely having been selected for the study.

On the group difference of the pre-/post-treatment questionnaires, parents generally scored higher in the post-treatment questionnaire than on the pre-treatment questionnaire ($p=.000$). A comparison by group level also showed the same result (family: $p=.003$; independent: $p=.000$; control: $p=.000$). The explanation for the control group's significant improvement may be that the programme had developed the participants' attention and interest in English extensive reading, too. These quantitative results showed that both children and parents scored significantly higher in the post-test than in the pre-test. That is, the project had a positive influence on the participants' attitudes.

Table 5.3 Group means of parents’ attitudes in pre-/post-treatment questionnaires – strong agreement

Parent – Attitude		family reading (N=11)				reading alone (N=18)				control (N=34)			
Questions		Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD
1. reading is important	Pre	4	5	4.73	0.47	3	5	4.83	0.51	3	5	4.76	0.50
	Post	4	5	4.73	0.47	3	5	4.67	0.59	1	5	4.56	0.82
11. read to find information	Pre	2	5	3.64	0.81	2	5	3.61	1.09	2	5	3.48	1.00
	Post	1	4	3.45	0.93	2	5	3.61	0.78	1	5	3.50	0.83
12. reading storybooks is a fun way	Pre	2	5	4.18 ^{G*}	0.87	1	5	3.94 ^{G*}	1.06	2	5	3.45	0.83
	Post	1	4	3.36	0.92	2	5	3.72	1.02	1	5	3.26	0.83

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.
G* Group difference before the treatment, significant at the .05 level

Table 5.4 Group means of parents’ attitudes in pre-/post-treatment questionnaires – average opinion

Parent – Attitude		family reading (N=11)				reading alone (N=18)				control (N=34)			
Questions		Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD
3. confident in English	Pre	1	5	3.09	1.22	1	5	2.61	1.09	1	5	2.71	0.94
	Post	1	4	2.91	1.04	1	5	2.61	1.29	1	5	2.65	0.88
4. not nervous when read in English	Pre	1	5	3.18	1.25	1	5	2.78	1.17	1	5	2.85	1.03
	Post	1	5	2.91	1.22	1	5	3.11	1.28	1	5	2.97	1.00
5. not consider English reading hard	Pre	1	5	3.00	1.10	1	5	3.06	1.16	1	5	2.67	0.99
	Post	1	4	3.00	1.10	1	5	3.28	1.32	1	5	2.88	0.98
7. happy when read in English	Pre	2	4	3.36	0.67	1	5	3.50	1.15	1	5	3.18	0.76
	Post	1	4	3.09	0.83	2	5	3.44	0.92	1	5	3.12	0.84
8. generally understand the content	Pre	1	5	3.27	1.10	1	5	3.22	1.26	1	5	3.15	1.02
	Post	1	4	3.27	1.01	1	5	3.11	1.28	1	5	3.00	0.92
9. like reading English storybooks	Pre	2	4	2.91	0.70	1	5	3.17	1.42	1	5	2.64	0.78
	Post	1	4	2.82	0.75	1	5	2.83	1.25	1	5	2.79	0.88
10. read in English on one’s own will	Pre	1	4	2.82	0.87	1	5	3.44	1.15	2	5	3.12	0.89
	Post	1	4	3.27	0.90	1	5	3.50	1.15	1	5	3.18	0.83

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.
G* Group difference before the treatment, significant at the .05 level

The third part of the post-treatment questionnaire (implementation and reflection) showed that none of the children in these two groups said they wanted to quit reading in English after the programme. All of the children in the family reading group and reading alone group were willing to participate in similar future English reading programmes; however, two of the children in family reading group said they would not introduce others to this kind of programme. In the family reading group, 36% of the children valued the programme highly, and so did 67% of the children in reading alone group. Three-quarters of the children thought they had benefited from the

programme, and they felt the areas of benefit included: longer English reading time, increased knowledge, gaining some enjoyment from reading a book, being very happy, better English ability, slowly building up reading interest, learning words, reading more English books, being more interested in English, increasing curiosity about and knowledge of English, liking English more, and finding English even more interesting.

My qualitative interview data also provided evidence to support this hypothesis. Children from the experimental groups expressed their feelings towards English reading in the interview at the end of the programme. For example (see Appendix 37 for originals):

‘I think it’s very interesting. I feel that the content of the books, both words and pictures, are interesting.’ (FRG04)⁷⁰

‘I think reading English storybooks is really fun.’ (FRG05)

‘I’m more interested in English now.’ (FRG09)

‘I feel that my English is improving.’ (FRG10)

‘I like reading English storybooks more now. I lived in the US for a while and read some storybooks, but I stopped reading when I came back. Now I will start reading English storybooks again.’ (RAG04)

‘I am very interested in English storybooks.’ (RAG07)

‘Although I am forced to learn English, I like storybooks a bit...I still read a little.’ (RAG01)

‘Now, I feel English looks easier to me.’ (RAG12)

‘I think English storybooks are very interesting. I like English more than before.’ (RAG17)

⁷⁰ FRG: Family Reading Group
RAG: Reading Alone Group
These responses are translated from the Chinese.

‘I liked English from the beginning, but after reading storybooks I have deeper feelings towards English.’ (RAG06)

‘I feel that I have learned some words and pictures.’ (RAG18)

‘It is really cool to see all kinds of English books.’ (RAG15)

‘I think the textbooks in the English cram schools are more boring, because textbooks are more fixed in content...I feel I’ve read more stories, this is more fun.’ (FRG07)

In short, the quantitative data showed positive influence on reading participants’ attitude and the qualitative data showed learners’ support of the programme. Therefore, this hypothesis can be sustained.

5.1.2 Hypothesis 1b: Home extensive reading project changes reading participants’ (family readers and independent readers) behaviour, e.g. reading without stopping to check up unknown words.

This hypothesis looks into the change of the participants’ behaviour. The reading behaviour component of the questionnaire consisted of 20 questions in 5-point Likert scale. In order to understand participants’ behaviour, I divided the 20 questions into four categories (reading methods, joint reading, behaviour and habit); the mean of each question is listed in Tables 5.5-5.8.

We will first look at the general behaviour response of the participants in terms of the four categories and then consider differences among groups before the treatment. Then, following the tables, I will discuss the differences between the pre- and post-treatment responses.

Regarding reading methods, the Kruskal-Wallis test (similar to One-Way Anova in parametric analysis) of the pre-treatment questionnaire showed no significant difference among the three groups. The participants showed no strong tendency for vocabulary checks during reading, adjustment of speed, material finding, reading length and audio usage.⁷¹

⁷¹ Although a reader of this thesis would expect a table that only includes pre-treatment results since I have not mentioned the post-treatment at all yet, I decide to show the complete tables here with the pos-treatment results because it will be more convenient for the readers to read than to present it at the end.

Table 5.5 Group means of children’s behaviour in pre-/post-treatment questionnaires -methods

Child – Behavior		family reading (N=11)				reading alone (N=18)				control (N=34)			
Questions		Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD
1. stop reading for word checks	Pre	1	5	3.00*	1.61	1	5	2.67	1.53	1	5	3.29*	1.03
	Post	1	4	2.27	1.10	1	5	3.06	1.63	1	5	2.82	1.11
2. adjust speed	Pre	3	5	4.00	0.77	1	5	3.89	1.28	1	5	3.47	1.38
	Post	1	5	3.64	1.12	2	5	4.00	0.84	2	5	3.71	0.91
3. find suitable/ interesting materials	Pre	3	5	3.91	0.83	1	5	3.67	1.28	1	5	3.82	1.11
	Post	3	5	4.18	0.87	3	5	4.17	0.86	1	5	3.50	1.13
4. read for longer than 15 minutes	Pre	1	5	4.00	1.34	1	5	3.50	1.29	1	5	3.38	1.21
	Post	2	5	3.73	1.27	2	5	3.83	0.92	1	5	3.47	0.99
6. tapes/CDs are necessary	Pre	2	5	3.18	0.75	1	5	3.78	1.26	3	5	3.74*	0.83
	Post	2	5	3.36	0.92	2	5	3.94	1.00	1	5	3.09	1.26

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.
G* Group difference before the treatment, significant at the .05 level

On joint reading, the Kruskal-Wallis Test of the pre-treatment questionnaire showed no significant difference among the three groups. The participants generally agreed that family reading helps proficiency and parents’ company increases interest. However, the participants showed no strong opinions about how home reading helps proficiency or interest, how parents should accompany their children and whether learners like discussions after reading.

Table5. 6 Group means of children’s behaviour in pre-/post-treatment questionnaires – joint reading

Child – Behavior		family reading (N=11)				reading alone (N=18)				control (N=34)			
Questions		Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD
5. family reading helps proficiency	Pre	3	5	4.09	0.94	2	5	4.11	0.96	1	5	3.74	1.11
	Post	3	5	4.18	0.87	3	5	4.22	0.88	1	5	3.62	1.16
7. parents' company increase interest	Pre	3	5	4.55	0.69	1	5	3.83	1.38	2	5	3.82	0.97
	Post	1	5	4.18	1.33	2	5	3.89	0.96	1	5	3.88	1.09
8. prefer reading alone	Pre	1	5	3.18	1.17	1	5	3.11	1.23	1	5	3.29	1.22
	Post	1	5	2.64	1.12	1	5	3.72*	1.13	1	5	3.00	1.10
9. parents should not intervene after their children can read independently	Pre	2	5	3.36	0.81	1	5	3.11	1.28	1	5	3.21	1.37
	Post	1	5	2.45	1.37	1	5	3.72	1.27	1	5	3.18	1.24
10. enjoy discussing with people	Pre	2	5	3.36	0.81	1	5	3.67	1.37	1	5	3.35	1.07
	Post	1	5	3.91	1.45	1	5	3.50	1.20	1	5	3.24	0.96

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.
G* Group difference before the treatment, significant at the .05 level

Regarding reading behaviour, the Kruskal-Wallis test of the pre-treatment questionnaire showed no significant difference among the three groups in Q 11- Q13; participants generally disagreed that reading out loud is good and they usually read illustrations carefully. In addition, participants agreed with the statement that reading

different books helps proficiency more than reading the same books. However, there was a group difference on Q14 ($p=.002$). The Mann-Whitney U Test further revealed that the independent readers agreed more on this statement than both the control group learners ($p=.000$) and family readers ($p=.017$). That is, independent readers said they changed their reading methods more often than the other two groups.

Table 5.7 Group means of children’s behaviour in pre-/post-treatment questionnaires - behaviour

Child – Behavior		family reading (N=11)				reading alone (N=18)				control (N=34)			
Questions		Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD
11. reading out loud is good	Pre	1	5	3.18	1.40	1	5	2.22	1.26	1	5	2.44	1.16
	Post	1	5	2.64	1.43	1	5	2.83	1.29	1	4	2.32	1.01
12. reading different books helps more	Pre	3	5	4.00	0.89	1	5	3.78	1.26	1	5	3.94	1.20
	Post	1	5	3.82	1.40	2	5	3.89	0.96	1	5	3.74	1.02
13. read pictures carefully	Pre	2	5	4.18	1.08	1	5	4.06	1.26	1	5	3.76	1.07
	Post	3	5	4.36	0.81	3	5	4.33	0.84	2	5	3.76	0.99
14. change your reading method to try something new	Pre	1	5	3.36	1.21	2	5	4.39 ^{G*}	0.98	1	5	3.24	1.02
	Post	1	5	3.36	1.03	3	5	3.83*	0.79	2	5	3.41	0.89

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.
^{G*} Group difference before the treatment, significant at the .05 level

On reading behaviour, the Kruskal-Wallis test of the pre-treatment questionnaire showed no significant difference among the three groups, except Q18 ($p=.005$). The Mann-Whitney U Test further revealed that the independent readers agreed more on this statement than the control group learners ($p=.002$). That is, independent readers were reported to make more predictions when they read ($p=.002$).

Table 5.8 Group means of children’s behaviour in pre-/post-treatment questionnaires - habit

Child – Behavior		family reading (N=11)				reading alone (N=18)				control (N=34)			
Questions		Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD
15. re-read books	Pre	2	5	3.45	1.13	1	5	3.56	1.25	1	5	3.44	0.96
	Post	2	5	3.73	1.10	2	5	3.94	1.00	1	5	3.24	0.92
16. ask oneself questions	Pre	1	5	3.00	1.00	1	5	3.39	1.09	1	5	3.03	1.11
	Post	1	4	2.55	0.93	1	5	3.78	1.11	1	5	2.94	1.15
17. retell the story in one’s own words	Pre	2	5	3.45	0.93	1	5	3.39	1.24	1	5	2.85	1.16
	Post	1	5	3.36	1.21	2	5	3.72	1.13	1	5	3.06	1.35
18. predict about what happens	Pre	3	5	3.82	0.87	3	5	4.06 ^{G*}	0.80	1	5	3.21	0.95
	Post	1	5	3.73	1.42	1	5	4.06	1.21	1	5	3.38	1.07
19. copy words into a notebook	Pre	1	5	3.09	1.30	1	5	3.11	1.41	1	5	2.94	1.07
	Post	1	5	3.09	1.38	2	5	4.06*	1.11	1	5	2.74	1.14
20. vocabulary notebook helps	Pre	3	5	3.64	0.92	1	5	3.89	1.32	1	5	3.56	1.21
	Post	1	5	3.27	1.35	2	5	4.00	1.08	1	5	3.32	1.22

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.
^{G*} Group difference before the treatment, significant at the .05 level

Let us now look at the comparison between pre- and post-treatment questionnaires to see if there is a change in the participants' behaviour. As mentioned in section 4.8.3.1, I do not intend to sum up the scores of questions here because what I wanted to investigate was if there was a change in the reading participants' behaviour. Therefore, I used the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test to look at differences in the pre- and post-treatment results in the three groups. The family readers' score of Q1 'stopping reading for vocabulary check' was significantly higher in the pre-treatment questionnaire ($p=.039$). This indicated that the learners had become more used to reading for the general idea and had become able to tolerate unknown vocabulary in their reading. This is one of the features of extensive reading approach – subconscious vocabulary building - and the results suggest that the family readers came to accept the approach.⁷² Also, independent readers reported that they preferred to read alone (Q8: $p=.046$), changed their reading method less often (Q14: $p=.038$), and recorded unfamiliar words in a vocabulary notebook more (Q19: $p=.006$) in the post-treatment questionnaire than in the pre-treatment questionnaire. Regarding Q14, the independent readers may have found their own ways of comfort reading and thus reading with the same method. This might also be the reason why independent readers preferred reading alone because they did not need help with reading at all. However, the vocabulary notebook was hardly used, according to the sample of these collected from the experimental groups after the programme. Only 15 of the family and independent readers ($n=29$) used the vocabulary notebook and only six of them had more than five pages of records (see Appendix 26). The results of the control group showed that, in the pre-treatment questionnaire, these children checked up words during reading less often (Q1: $p=.012$) and they valued the importance of story-tapes and CDs more (Q6: $p=.009$) than in the post-treatment questionnaire. It was not surprising to see that the control group's Q1 response was the opposite of what was expected from the experimental groups because the control group was not trained on the extensive reading approach yet.

The above child data revealed only a few changes in behaviour after the treatment. Therefore, the answer to hypothesis 1b is inconclusive. This may be the result of the short experiment period, participants' lack of understanding of the approach or underestimation of value of the approach. The study period was short, compared to Krashen's suggestion that extensive programmes should last more than a year. The lack of understanding of the approach could indicate insufficient usage of the parents' guidebook, which in the end turned out to be unsuccessful. Usage of the parents'

⁷² It may be the influence of parents' guide book.

guidebook will be discussed in more detail in section 5.3.2.

5.1.3 Hypothesis 1c: The total number of reading sessions and attitude are positively correlated.

Pearson Correlation Analysis of Bivariate Correlations in product-moment correlation was used to find out whether there was a correlation between the total number of reading sessions of the two experimental groups and the attitude from both pre- and post-treatment data. The correlation value is assumed at 90 per cent confidence. The number of times that the children read during the study period, based on their reading records, was correlated with the total score of the attitude scale. No correlation was found, contrary to the hypothesis (Table 5.9, see Appendix 35 for scatterplot graph).

Table 5.9 Pearson Correlation between Attitude and Total number of sessions

	N	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Attitude (Pre-treatment Questionnaire) and Total number of sessions of Family and Independent Groups	29	0.126	0.515
Attitude (Post-treatment Questionnaire) and total number of sessions of Family and Independent Groups	29	0.310	0.102

* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

A between group correlation analysis showed no correlation either (Table 5.10). This suggested that children who had a better attitude did not necessarily read more and vice versa. I can only speculate that this was the result of the children’s busy timetable after school. Most of the children attended cram schools for different subjects or music and they simply had no time to read more (see section 3.1 - 3.2.). In conclusion, there was no relationship between reading frequency and attitude. This hypothesis is not supported.

The results from the above three hypotheses showed that this programme had a positive effect on the participants’ attitude because the overall score for post-treatment attitude was significantly higher than the pre-treatment score, similar to the results of many previous ER programmes. The programme did not change the participants’ reading habits/behaviour much. Only four items out of twenty were significantly different after the project (one from the family reading group and three from the reading alone group). Finally, no correlation between attitude and total number of sessions was found. That is, learners with better attitude did not necessarily read more.

Table 5.10 Correlation of attitude and total number of session by group

	N	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Attitude (Pre-treatment Questionnaire) and Total number of sessions of Family Reading Group	11	-0.069	0.839
Attitude (Post-treatment Questionnaire) and Total number of sessions of Family Reading Group	11	0.089	0.794
Attitude (Pre-treatment Questionnaire) and Total number of sessions of Independent Reading Group	18	0.215	0.392
Attitude (Post-treatment Questionnaire) and Total number of sessions of Independent Reading Group	18	0.415	0.087

However, we must remember that in this study, the quantitative data was based on self-reported behaviour on the questionnaires and a difference between the participants’ real and reported practices may nonetheless exist.

5.2 Hypothesis 2: Extra-curricular reading has a positive influence on primary learners’ English proficiency.

The self-designed proficiency test battery was used for pre-/post and delayed post-tests. The three tests were in the same form, including forty vocabulary items, seven scrambled sentences, and one picture description to investigate their morpho-syntax. First, an analysis was carried out to see whether differences among the groups (family reading, reading alone and control) existed and then to see whether the family reading group and reading alone group learners progressed after reading.

5.2.1 Hypothesis 2a: Reading improves learners’ vocabulary.

The tested vocabulary items should vary in appearance in the storybooks; some appear more often than others. Therefore, we need to examine whether the three tests were similar in terms of their appearance in the storybooks. The content of twenty-one storybooks (six real books and fifteen graded readers from various series from the book collection of the study, see Appendix 29) was used as a database for this examination. Using Test of Homogeneity of Proportions, the result showed that the word appearance level in the 21 storybooks was not significantly different in the three tests ($p=0.868>0.05$). That is, the three tests were similar in terms of overlapping with

the storybook vocabulary.

In the pre-treatment questionnaire, no significant differences across the three groups were found on the percentage of total correct answers, the percentage of correct easy vocabulary and the percentage of correct difficult vocabulary (see 4.8.3.6 for the category of vocabulary). Evidence of improvement relied on the evidence of increased level of correct answers in the post-test and the delayed post-test. However, I found no significant improvement comparing the post-test and the pre-test, using the Wilcoxon Signed test. The only difference found was that the control group had a significantly lower rate of answers in the post-test, compared to that of pre-test ($p=.044$).

The comparison among these three subgroups between pre-test and delayed post-test showed no significant differences either, with only one exception: more control group children improved on the difficult vocabulary ($p=.000$). Unfortunately, I have no explanation for this. If an interview had been carried out, I could have perhaps found out the reason.

Let us now look at the data from another viewpoint. By summing up the individual improvement percentages (post-test correct percentage of vocabulary / pre-test correct percentage of vocabulary) and using the mean value in that subgroup, I could see whether that subgroup improved. If the mean equals one, it means no improvement. If the mean is 0.38, the subgroup did 62% less well than before. If the mean is 1.58, the subgroup improved 58%. The test results showed that the mean of family reading group was 1.07, the reading alone group 0.84,⁷³ and the control group 0.94. That is, only the family reading group improved.⁷⁴ (See Appendix 33 for details).

I also suspected that the non-improvement results were due to the inappropriate choice of words on the test. Therefore, the Thorndike and Lorge (1944) wordlist of frequency was used to see if the items in the test were low frequency words and thus inappropriate (Appendix 32).⁷⁵ From the frequency classification list, I found that among the 80 items used in all three tests, the frequency of 14 items were comparatively low. For example, the lowest two items were 'fourteen' and 'notebook',

⁷³ One of the children scored 0 on the pretest and thus is excluded here.

⁷⁴ Unfortunately, this cannot tell if there is a significant difference.

⁷⁵ Nation (1990:20) considered Thorndike and Lorge (1944) to be the most widely known word list and has been used as the basis for vocabulary selection for many English courses and series of simplified reading books. Although the list is still used as a source of information about what words to teach, it is based on work done over 50 years ago. Therefore, vocabulary researchers have pointed out its weakness (Engels, 1968; Nation, 1990; Richards, 1970; Roberts, 1965) and various word lists were developed for different purposes and for different genres. Section 2.4.2.2 in this thesis suggests that the use of frequency lists still seem vague and problematic.

and they were only at '4' and '6' occurrences per million. If we compared the test items with the first 1,000 words for English learners in the Thorndike and Lorge wordlist,⁷⁶ only 28 (35%) of the 80 words were within the first 500 to be learned, and 23 (29%) were within the 500 - 1,000. That means, only 51 (64%) items of the 80 were within the 1,000 words for beginners. Among those 29 words that were not within the first 1,000 words, nine of them were from the difficult class and 20 from the easy class of words (See Appendix 32).

Therefore, I investigated the comparison of the tests again using the 51 items within the first 1,000 words. The comparisons between pre-test and post-test of all children and among subgroups still showed no improvement. The comparisons between the pre-test and delayed post-test for all children showed significant improvement of correct answers ($p=.035$); however, no significant improvement was shown at the subgroup level. This result is inconclusive and points out the limitation of small samples in subgroups. In short, there was no significant improvement after the less frequent items were removed and therefore, the choice of tested items did not seem to have an impact on the study result. Please see Appendix 34 for details.

I also compared the test words to the list of sight words compiled by the committee of primary English at KeeLung City (English Teaching Resource Website of KeeLung City, 2008) (see section 4.8.3.6). Primary learners should have 300 basic words, according to the list. The comparison showed that 43 of the 80 (54.75%) tested words were sight words in the national curriculum in Taiwan. In other words, more half of the tested words were considered important basic vocabulary by local authorities. Therefore, the words should be acceptable for the test.

Let us now move on to see if there is a relationship between learners' vocabulary size and the amount learners read - the correlation between the learners' vocabulary improvement (using post-test correct answer percentage compared with pre-test correct answer percentage) and the total number of sessions. Only the post-test score was used here because it took place within the study period. The use of the delayed post-test was mainly to see the retention of proficiency improvement. Furthermore, testing on delayed post-test would probably make more sense if the participants had been asked to continue to read between the post-test and delayed post-test. After examination, there was no significant correlation between the two variables in either experimental group (Table 5.11 and Appendices 39 and 40).

⁷⁶ But using word list could be problematic too. Besides, the words in the test should already be in the high frequency word category because they were from the MOE basic word list, which was built based on high frequency word lists (see footnote 42 in chapter three).

Table 5.11 Correlation between vocabulary improvement and total number of sessions

	N	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Vocabulary Improvement and Total number of sessions (Family Reading Group: pre-test, post-test)	11	-0.193	0.569
Vocabulary Improvement and Total number of sessions (Independent Reading Group: pre-test, post-test)	18	-0.171	0.498
Vocabulary Improvement and Total number of sessions (Family Reading Group: pre-test, delayed post-test)	11	-0.149	0.662
Vocabulary Improvement and Total number of sessions (Independent Reading Group: pre-test, delayed post-test)	18	-0.187	0.459

It is possible that the learners were more correct on the words which appeared more frequently in the books. So, we can examine the relationship between the total number of correct responses of the two experimental groups and the frequency of the words in the 21 storybooks. No correlation was observed in the three tests (pre-test: $p=0.349$, post-test: $p=0.235$, delayed post-test: $p=0.453$).

The data seemed to suggest that no significant vocabulary improvement was found, although the family reading group seemed to show a higher individual improvement. Therefore, the hypothesis is not supported. Also, there is no correlation observed between the learners' vocabulary achievement and the vocabulary frequency in the sample storybooks. Vocabulary will only be learned if the learners are exposed to words. The reasons for no improvement may be that the vocabulary in the storybooks and the vocabulary tested did not overlap, which I briefly looked at with a subset of books in the beginning of this section. I did not track each individual's reading of certain books and test them on the words in those books because I considered it beyond the scope of this study. This needs a more qualitatively-oriented research. Other possible explanations for the insignificant improvement may be that the learners were not exposed to the words long enough, or that the numbers of the sample books and vocabulary were too small. These were the limitations of the present project. Although a more thorough analysis on the relationships between book selection, word frequency in storybooks, curricular wordlist, learners' vocabulary performance and learners' reading time could help us understand more, I will not discuss it further because it is considered beyond the scope of this thesis.

5.2.2 Hypothesis 2b: Reading improves learners' morpho-syntactic ability

This section contained two measures: sentence structuring ability and measure of learners' morpho-syntax through Organic Grammar (OG) criteria. We will start with sentence restructuring.

5.2.3 Hypothesis 2b-1: Reading improves learners' ability in jumbled sentences.

In this task, children need to restructure jumbled sentences and fill in the blanks given (one blank for each word with the first word of the sentence given) in the correct order. No significant differences were found among the subgroups in the pre-test on the percentage of answers and the percentage of correct answers. The post-test also showed no significant improvement among the three groups. However, more children in the reading alone group improved in the delayed post-test ($p=0.42$). Therefore, the hypothesis is supported. In order to know if the children kept reading during the period of post-test and delayed post-test, the reading record was reviewed. I found that only nine children (50%) of the reading alone group and six children (55%) of the family reading group kept reading after post-test. Fewer independent readers kept reading but the group showed better performance. Whether the improvement resulted from reading after post-test needs more investigation.

Looking at the individual improvement means (post-test/pre-test), I found that the reading alone group improved most (mean = 1.36), the control group improved the second most (mean = 1.15), but the family reading group did less well than before (mean = 0.72) (Appendix 33).

Next, I will see if there is correlation between vocabulary achievement and sentence restructuring achievement using Pearson correlation test. The results showed a positive correlation between these two in all of the three tests (Table 5.12). That is, a child who scored high in vocabulary also scored high in sentence restructuring (see Appendix 36), which reveals that there was no task-related factor in the design of proficiency test.

Table 5.12 Pearson correlation between correct restructuring percentage and correct vocabulary percentage

	N	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Correct Vocabulary Percentage and Correct Restructuring Percentage (Pre-test)	63	0.809***	0.000
Correct Vocabulary Percentage and Correct Restructuring Percentage (Post-test)	63	0.857***	0.000
Correct Vocabulary Percentage and Correct Restructuring Percentage (Delayed Post-test)	63	0.818***	0.000

***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

A correlation test was used between the improvement of sentence structuring task (using post-test correct answer percentage – pre-test correct answer percentage) and the total number of sessions. No significant correlation was found (Table 5.13).

Table 5.13 Correlation between sentence restructuring improvement and total number of sessions

	N	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Sentence Restructuring Improvement and Total number of sessions (Family Reading Group: pre-test, post-test)	11	0.122	0.721
Sentence Restructuring Improvement and Total number of sessions (Independent Reading Group: pre-test, post-test)	18	-0.078	0.758
Sentence Restructuring Improvement and Total number of sessions (Family Reading Group: pre-test, delayed post-test)	11	0.170	0.616
Sentence Restructuring Improvement and Total number of sessions (Independent Reading Group: pre-test, delayed post-test)	18	-0.132	0.601

At this point, I suspect whether the sentence types influenced the answers because it is possible that some structures were easier for the children than the others. Then, children would score higher on certain structures than the others. For instance, compared to present simple affirmative structure, negative and interrogative might be more difficult and thus children may score lower on these two structures. Table 5.14 summarises the sentence tense, type, and the tokens of correct answers in each test.

Table 5.14 Sentence tense, type and frequency of correct answers in each test (N=63 children)

Sentence	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Tense	present	past	present	present	present	present	past
Type	imperative	affirmative+ negative		affirmative	interrogative	affirmative	interrogative
Pre-test	19	11	13	8	6	10	15
Post-test	30	22	12	14	11	16	28
Delayed Post-test	30	24	20	20	15	21	30

This analysis shows that: (1) Sentence 1 and 7 scored the highest, which were present imperative and past interrogative. (2) The tokens gradually improved from the pre-test to the delayed post-test, except for sentence three. (3) In all three tests, sentence five scored lowest, which is present interrogative. Since sentence seven was also an interrogative but scored highest, it seemed that tense probably was not where the problem was, but rather, the frequency adverb. In all three tests, there were 189 occurrences of the frequency adverb ‘often’ (one occurrence in each test x 3 tests x 63 children), but children only used it 50 (26%) times correctly, in ‘how often’. Moreover, 15 children correctly answered once, seven children correctly answered twice and only seven were correct all three times. The wrong sentence structure ‘how do/does...’ was used 77 times (41%), with 22 children being correct once, 14 twice and nine being correct three times. It seemed that only those seven who used how often correctly three times could be claimed to have acquired the structure; others were probably using learned knowledge to solve the question. The ‘How do’ structure was probably a formulaic chunk because this is heard often in sentences like ‘how do you do?’ or ‘how do you say it’ in the classroom (see section 2.5.2).

The analysis shows that the family reading group and reading alone group outperformed the control group after the project, although in many cases the difference was only small. For example, the family reading group showed more individual improvement than the other two groups on vocabulary. The reading alone group had the most individual improvement on sentence structuring.

5.2.4 Hypothesis 2b-2: Picture description task and learners’ morpho-syntax

The preliminary analysis of this part of the test battery examined the differences on number of English words used overall (as a general measurement of fluency), of simple sentences, complex sentences, compound sentences, total sentences and average length of sentence in learners’ written description of a picture (see Appendix

21 for pictures). No difference was found in the pre-test among the three groups.

The comparison between pre-test and post-test revealed that more family reading group children wrote more English words in the post-test than in the pre-test ($p=0.027$). In contrast, more control group children wrote less in the post-test ($p=0.001$). In addition, a comparison between pre-test and delayed post-test showed that more family readers used more English words in the delayed post-test than in the pre-test ($p=0.018$), while more independent reading children also improved on the number of English words ($p=0.001$) and total sentences ($p=0.041$). More control group children showed decreased numbers of English words ($p=0.000$), compound sentences ($p=0.014$), total sentences ($p=0.034$) and average sentence length ($p=0.011$). In short, the control group tended to write less and less, contrary to the other two groups who wrote more and more.

5.2.4.1 Organic Grammar analysis of morpho-syntax

I would like to spend more time on this part of the analysis for the following reasons: firstly, Krashen's idea that improvement in language comes from reading can be tested. Secondly, research studies in L2 acquisition have (heretofore) very loosely defined the concept of *i + 1* due to a lack of understanding of what *i* is. Organic Grammar provides detailed information on levels that Krashen lacked when he collaborated with Bailey (Bailey *et al.*, 1974) and OG is relatively new, had only been applied in German (e.g. Vainikka & Young-Scholten, 1994) and only recently to English using written and oral samples (Young-Scholten & Ijuin, 2006a; 2006b). Thirdly, this type of more qualitative analysis does show very fine-grained changes in learners who read, as we will see, in the following analysis.

In L2 acquisition, criteria exist to measure how a language learner develops, in the form of Organic Grammar (Vainikka & Young-Scholten, 2007; Young-Scholten & Ijuin, 2006a). This kind of tool measures learners' morpho-syntactic development in stages. The aim of this section is to examine early morpho-syntactic development using learners' picture description and applying Organic Grammar (OG) criteria to classify learners at developmental stages. This is done through their written production before and after the project. A general description of the learners' performance will first be given, followed by more discussion on specific issues from the data.

As mentioned earlier in chapter four, under Organic Grammar, inflectional

morphology is held to emerge in connection with syntax. The developmental process of increasing morphological variety and complexity parallels increasing syntactic complexity in the target language (Young-Scholten *et al.*, 2005). Table 5.15 summarises OG criteria.

Although there were 63 learners in the current study, only 32 completed all of the picture description part of the three proficiency tests, other learners left at least one of the three blank.⁷⁷ Therefore, only the samples from these 32 (seven children in the family reading group, six in the reading alone group and 19 in control group) were analysed. A total of 434 written sentences were analysed using OG criteria. In order to encourage the learners’ production, I told them that it was acceptable to use some Chinese to fill in the vocabulary they have not learned. Therefore, there were cases where they would just use Chinese to fill in the verbs. These verbs were of course not counted in my data analysis.

Table 5.15 Organic Grammar: Criteria for stages in L2 English

Stage	<i>word order in declaratives</i>	<i>types of verbs</i>	<i>verbal agreement; tense marking</i>	<i>pronouns</i>	<i>complex syntax</i>
1	initially resembles that of the NL	thematic (main) verbs only	none	pronouns absent	None
2	resembles the TL	thematic verbs; copula 'is' appears	none	pronouns forms begin to emerge	formulaic or intonation-based Qs
3	resembles the TL	thematic verbs, modals; copula forms beyond 'is'	no agreement; some tense, some aspect, but not productive	more pronoun forms, but they can still be missing	Qs formulaic or w/o inversion; conjoined clauses
4	resembles the TL	thematic verbs, modals, copula forms beyond 'is'; range of auxiliaries emerges	productive tense, aspect; some agreement, esp. forms w/ 'be'	pronouns obligatory, 'there' and existential 'it' emerge	productive Qs, but may still lack inversion; simple subordination
5	resembles the TL	complex tense, aspect forms; passives; range of thematic verbs, modals, auxiliaries	forms usually correct, apart from those newly attempted	use of 'there' and 'it' beyond stock phrases	all Qs with inversion; complex subordination

(Young-Scholten & Ijuin, 2006a)

To help understand how the OG stage or level is assigned in this study, I here provide examples, both from a series of OG studies and my own data (Table 5.16). Learners’

⁷⁷ I could not force all the children to finish picture description at the time of the test for the following reasons: Firstly, they were completing the tests at their own pace, and some children may not have time to get to this task. Secondly, children may not be confident to write in English yet, and so they just stopped after the second task. Thirdly, some children may simply be too lazy to write. Finally, I did not force them to finish this task because I did not want to pressurize them during the study, which may lead to demotivation.

productions containing Chinese characters were kept intact to show the learners’ original writing and spelling and some original hand-writings have been scanned and are included below. Some details of OG criteria need to be considered here, as pointed out in Young-Scholten et al. (2005). Syntactic complexity criteria were: (a) coordination vs. simple vs. complex subordination, (b) purely grammatical subjects ‘it’ and ‘there’; (c) declarative clauses in which something other than a subject was initial; (d) constructions involving elements other than a subject or agent in initial position such as passives. Included in the analysis were (a) relative clauses in which the relative pronoun and auxiliary were absent, as in ‘a ship (which was) passing by’. Criteria (b) through (d) revolve around the initial position in an utterance. Sentences comprising an agent subject, a verb and (if transitive) an object represent simple syntax (possibly only a verb phrase), as in ‘the boat hit the bridge’. Sentences with

Table 5.16 Examples of OG levels

OG stage	Examples from OG studies	Examples from current study
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bicycle.</i> • <i>One boy.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>she one chair TV</i> (FRG01)
1a	Japanese object-verb (OV) order <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>bread eat</i> • <i>bananas eating</i> (Yamada-Yamamoto, 1993) 	Chinese (L1)- based word order <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 外面 正在 rainy. (outside be-ing) • They 正在 討論 天氣. (be-ing discuss weather) • 外面 have many tree. (outside) • Have one she 在 watching TV. (CG04) (be-ing)
1b	English verb-object (VO) order <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>eating banana</i> • <i>wash your hand</i> (Yamada-Yamamoto, 1993) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It is 晴天 Day.</i> (CG03) (sunny day)
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>This is car.</i> • <i>You my car hit here teacher.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Tom is sleep.</i> (CG01) • <i>Mary siting chair, looking book.</i> (CG02)
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Boat hit the bridge and fall down and people looked that boat.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>On the livingroom, one girl is watching TV and watch newspaper, another girl is 選 (choosing) dress.</i> (FRG05)
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>First we saw the white ship goes to hit the bridge.</i> • <i>I see a ship which was down to the river and pass the bridge and come out to other side river.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Lisa is watching TV while Sally is watching for clothes.</i> (CG05) • <i>The cat “Monster” is playing and he break the vase when Ann came home.</i> (CG05)
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I am so happy that I found my grandfather and grandmother in their store.</i> • <i>I was in the river contoured with beautiful green trees.</i> 	None.

existential ‘it’ or ‘there’ as in ‘it looked like the boat was sinking’ are syntactically more complex, with ‘it’ filling a position that in English is required for purely syntactic reasons. Not only do some of the native languages spoken by the students whom Young-Scholten *et al.* studied allow pronominal subjects to be dropped (e.g. in Chinese, (ni) *chi fan mei?* (you) have eaten yet?, ‘*Have you eaten yet?*’), but previous studies of both child first and child and adult second language learners show an early stage of development where personal pronouns are dropped and a later stage where ‘it’ and ‘there’ emerge (see e.g. Vainikka & Young-Scholten, 1994). One must, however, exercise caution in over-interpreting learner utterances that may simply be the result of mastery of holistic chunks such as ‘there is-’ and ‘it’s—’. In the OG criteria, ‘there’ and ‘it’ emerge at level 4.

It is assumed that a declarative clause in which the first element is not the subject, for example an adverb or a prepositional phrase is preposed, is more complex than subject-verb-object utterances. In Chinese, it is grammatical and common to place a prepositional phrase in the beginning of a sentence. For example,

- (24) Zai chu-fang you yi-zhi lao-shu.
 In the kitchen there be a rat.
 ‘*There is a rat in the kitchen.*’

An L1 based sentence would place a PP initially and this therefore might be L1 influence rather than a more advanced stage.

Finally, utterances where an element is actually displaced are more complex given the requirement for an additional syntactic position for that element. Passives are a good example, where the subject in the passive construction is not the agent, as in ‘the bridge was hit by the boat’ (Young-Scholten *et al.*, 2005).

5.2.4.2 Change of OG stages

In this section, we will look at the change of learners’ OG stages. First, we will look at the learners’ OG stages in the pre-test data to get a general understanding of the stage distribution. Let us start from the lowest level data. FRG01 produced four nouns only; therefore, he was classified as level 0. CG08 wrote mostly in Chinese with an ungrammatical sentence ‘what is do you car’. CG08’s production was in conversation style and the sentence seemed to mean ‘What are you using your car for today?’ in reference to the context created in Mandarin Chinese by CG08 before and after the

English production. The learner probably knows ‘your car’ and remembers the question format for ‘what is’ and its sentence initial position. In addition, in Chinese, ‘do’ can sometimes be used for ‘for’ in this context; therefore, I suspect this is a chunk usage. However, there was no other English utterance in the production for me to confirm. CG09’s sentence was an L1-based Chinese structure with a few misspelled NPs filling in the NP position. Here is the sentence:⁷⁸

(25)

有 tor garl a glar 在 看 book a glor 在 整理衣服
you zai kan zai zheng-li-yi-fu
there are two girls a girl be-Ving read book a girl be-Ving fold clothes
(CG09)

‘There are two girls. One girl is reading a book, the other is folding clothes.’

In Chinese, the sentence is:

(26)

You liang-ge nu-hai yi-ge nu-hai zai kan shu yi-ge nu-hai
There are two girls one girl be-Ving read book one girl

zai zheng-li yi-fu
be-Ving fold clothes

Therefore, these three learners (FRG01, CG08, and CG09) were classified as stage 0.

The following additional examples are from three learners:

(27) *It's rainy.* (CG03)

(28) 外面 正在 rainy. (CG04)⁷⁹

(outside) (be-ing)

'It's raining outside.'

(29) *They* 在 討論 天氣. (CG04)

(be-ing) (discuss) (weather)

‘They are discussing about the weather.’

(30) 外面 *have many tree.* (CG04)

(outside)

‘There are many trees outside.’

⁷⁸ Spelling has been left as it occurred, e.g. <tor> = 'two', <glar> = 'girl'.

⁷⁹ English translation of the Chinese phrases is given in parenthesis under the Chinese characters for reference.

(31) *Have one she 在 找 衣服.* (CG04)

(be-ing) (look for) (clothes)

‘There is a girl looking for clothes.’

(32) *Have one she 在 watching TV.* (CG04)

(be-ing)

‘There is a girl watching TV.’

(33)

Si Set 在 家里 Mother 在 挑衣服 She 在 看 book and look 电视
(at home) (choose clothes) (be-Ving)
(clock)

(RAG01)

Sentences (27) - (33) also showed strong evidence from L1 translation with Chinese words substituting for vocabulary not yet mastered by the children. (27) was difficult to place at a stage because it contained contraction *it's*, which does not occur early. Due to the fact that this was the only utterance in the test, I would say the learner was still at an early stage because in the post-test and delayed post-test, his production showed he was at stage 1 or 2. Since he was still at an early stage, this sentence probably was a memorised chunk from the textbook or teaching (Myles, 2004).⁸⁰ These three learners (CG3, CG4, RAG01) were thus classified at stage 1, given that they produced (non-finite) verbs.

Learners at stage 2 have started producing *is + V(-ing)* and copula *be*. For example:

(34) *Mary siting chair, looking book and wathing TV. Mary and mother are talking.* (CG02).

(35) *She is look the TV.* (FRG02)

(36) *Her mother is take cloth.* (FRG04)

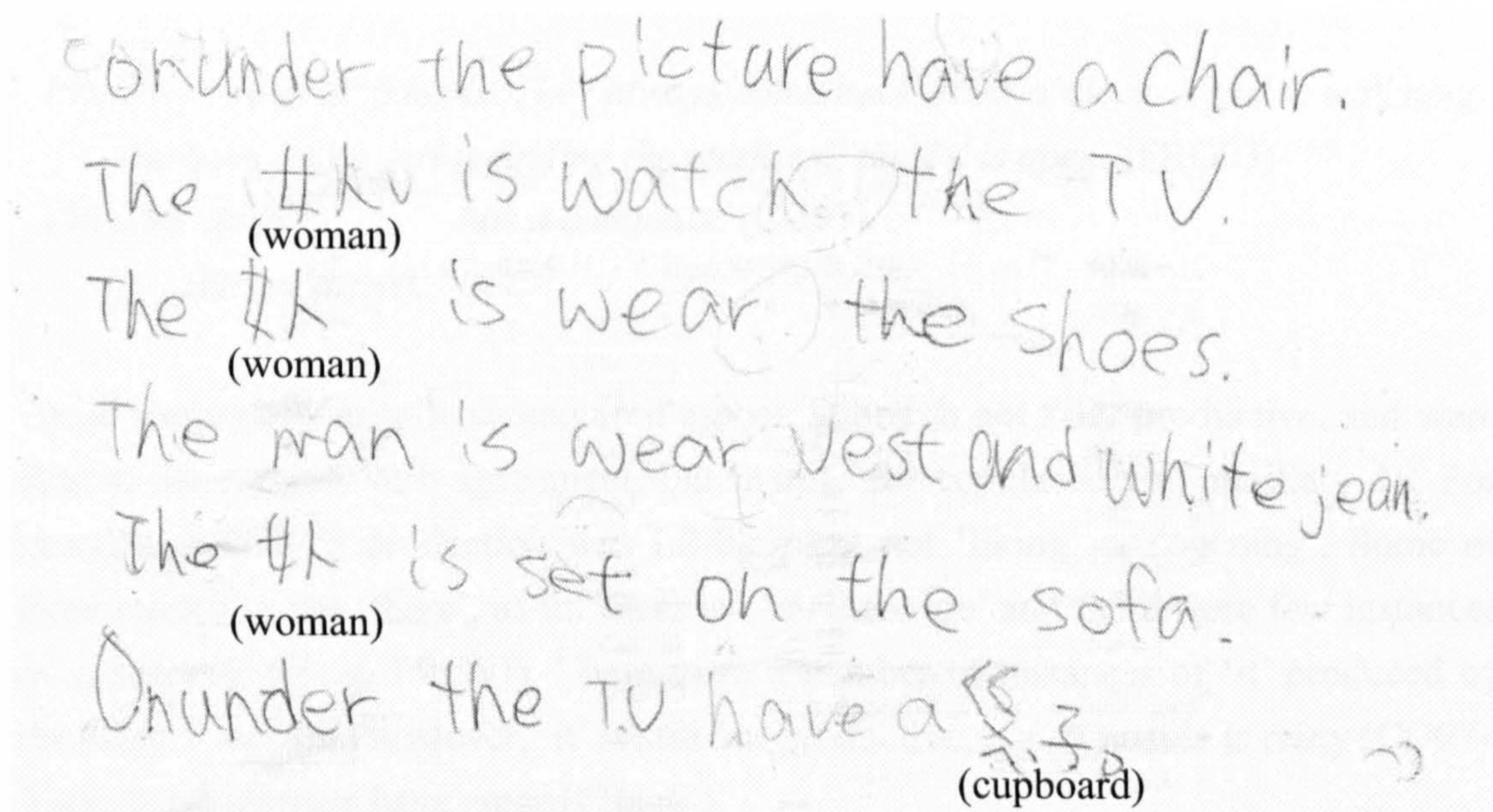
(37) *On the livingroom, one girl is watching TV and watch newspaper.* (FRG05)

(38) *One girl is watch TV.* (RAG02)

⁸⁰ This is actually part of early instruction. In many primary English textbooks, I found evidence of ‘It’s...’. For instance, in Book I of the series of *Happy Day* (2002), I found ‘It’s a pencil’ in Unit four, ‘It’s my school bag’ and ‘It’s big’ in Unit five, and ‘It’s Christmas’ and ‘It’s yellow’ in Unit six. The form of ‘it’s’ is taught rather early in the Taiwanese textbooks. This will be discussed later in section 5.2.4.4 and 5.2.4.6 later.

- (39) *That's a book and 講 手機. (CG18)*
 (talk) (mobile phone)
- (40) *Candy watching TV and reading book. (CG19)*
- (41) *The 女人 is wear the shoes. (CG17)*
 (woman)
- (42) *The living room in have a TV, computer, tobles, chair, solf, book, clock and two gril. (CG10)*

CG17 used *V-ing* and bare verb interchangeably, without any copula *be* and auxiliary *be* in the sentences. CG13 showed good morphology at first glance; however, looking more closely, I found that her sentences were mainly from two structures (as can be seen from the following scan): Subject + copula *be* + complement (adjective or preposition phrase), and subject + auxiliary *be* + V(-ing) (only once). This learner probably only used the structure that she was confident with. Thus while learners at this stage produce V-ing, it is not yet fully targetlike.

- (43)
- 
- Under the picture have a chair.
- The 女人 (woman) is watch the TV.
- The 女人 (woman) is wear the shoes.
- The man is wear vest and white jean.
- The 女人 (woman) is set on the sofa.
- Under the TV have a 櫃子 (cupboard)

(CG17)

Some learners at the pre-test had also started to show agreement on thematic verbs, copula *be* and auxiliary *be*, for instance:

(44) *In the 5:55 Mary is watches the television. Her mother is take cloth.* (FRG04)

(45) *The boy has some 衣服.* (CG14)

(clothes)

While counting the tokens, I found, similar to Young-Scholten and Ijuin (2006a; 2006b) that there was more correct agreement for copula *be* and auxiliary *be* than for thematic verbs, and so I will analyse the latter separately later. No use of ‘there’ was found at this stage. Finally, learners started to use coordination, as FRG03 and CG07.

Some learners at pre-test showed a fairly good command of morphology.

(46) *She likes 吉他 and 鋼琴.* (CG16)

(guitar) (piano)

(47) *The girl are looking for TV.* (CG01)

(48) *The girl is watching TV. They have four 照片. The time is 6:11.* (CG06)

(picture)

(49) *There are two people in livingroom, one is a woman and one is a man.* (RAG06)

(50) *The room has a computer.* (RAG06)

(51) *Outside is rainy, so they can't go outside.* (CG07)

(52) *There are two people in living room.* (FRG07)

(53) *They are good friends. They always come back at six o'clock. A girl is watching the book and a girl is finding the cloth and the TV is open.* (FRG03)

(54) *The 客廳 has a computer.* (CG07)

(living room)

These learners seem to have acquired aspect, although not fully productive, and were able to use subject-verb agreement, but mainly for copula *be* and auxiliary *be*. For example, FRG03's production was L2-like, but not ‘liking’ or ‘opening’. Some of them started to use ‘there’, as in ‘there is’, or ‘there are’ and there were few instances of coordination (e.g. FRG03). There were a number of instances of ‘it’ produced by the stage 3 learners; however, ‘it’ is still not productive, e.g. *Outside is rainy (CG07). Thus, these learners have entered stage 3.

Young-Scholten *et al.* (2005) point out the non-linear nature of morpho-syntactic

development. As new forms and structures emerge, they often destabilize the learner's current interlanguage grammar (Selinker, 1972), resulting in new errors, and apparent backsliding. In the data, many examples like (37) and (44) exist. Learners seemed to go back to their former stage and this adds to the difficulty of differentiating learners' stages; therefore, sometimes, the stages were classified as 'between stage x and y' (Vainikka & Young-Scholten, 1994).

Although most of the learners are at early OG stages, there are some who are better than others. These children who outperform others tend to be those who had been receiving extra English lessons from cram schools. For instance, RAG05 and CG12 both said in their pre-treatment questionnaires that they received between four to six hours of English lessons at cram school per week, while CG05 had received less than two hours. RAG03 said she did not receive any cram school at the time of pre-treatment test and she did not produce any subordinate clauses at pre-test. These more advanced learners had very good morphology and showed they had acquired progressive aspect and agreement. More coordination and simple subordination clauses were used. The following examples illustrate this:

- (55) *Amy and her mother are in the living room.* (RAG03 – no cram school)
- (56) *Outside, it is rainy.* (RAG03)
- (57) *Then there is a photo picture, who looks like their mother.* (CG05 – 2 hours cram school / week)
- (58) *Lisa is watching TV while Sally is watching for clothes.* (CG05)
- (59) *Because they think the weather was so bad, so they didn't want to go out and play.* (RAG05 – 4-6 hours cram school / week)
- (60) *It is 6:55, I need to go faster, because I will be late, but my mother was look at the newspaper and weather. I was looking outside, it was raining.* (CG12– 4-6 hours cram school / week)

These learners (RAG03, CG05 RAG05 and CG12) fit into stage 4. Table 5.17 shows the details of each learner in terms of the OG criteria and Table 5.18 shows the distribution of the 32 learners in the three subgroups.

Table 5.17 Learners’ OG stages at the pre-test and the criteria

Learners	Pre-test	OG Criteria
FRG01	0	Four single words
CG08	0	L1 word order, memorised chunks
CG09	0	L1 word order, single word utterance,
RAG01	1	L1 word order, multiple word utterance, missing grammatical morphemes
CG03	1	Copula ‘is’, possible memorised production of whether ‘it’
CG04	1	L1 word order, no s v agreement, absent grammatical morpheme, bare verbs
FRG02	2	TL word order, missing copula, little agreement/tense, infinite verbs
FRG04	2	TL word order, copula ‘is’, pronoun emerges, little tense (unproductive)
FRG05	2	L2 word order, little tense/aspect, agreement, more pronouns emerge
RAG02	2	Copula ‘is’, no agreement/tense/aspect, auxiliary ‘is’ without -ing
FRG06	2	TL word order, copula ‘is’, possible memorised chunks
CG02	2	TL word order, no tense marking, copula missing, limited pronoun forms
CG13	2	TL word order, copula beyond ‘is’, some agreement, unproductive tense
CG14	2	TL word order, copula ‘is’, some agreement, missing main verbs
CG15	2	TL word order, copula ‘is’, some agreement
CG18	2	TL word order, copula ‘is’, pronouns emerge
CG19	2	TL word order, ‘copula ‘is’ missing, no agreement
RAG04	2-3	TL word order, copula beyond ‘is’, pronouns emerge
CG10	2-3	TL word order, copula ‘is’, little agreement, pronouns emerge
CG17	2-3	TL word order, copula ‘is’, some agreement, little aspect
FRG03	3	TL word order, tense/aspect agreement, coordination, ‘it’ emerges
CG01	3	TL word order, TL aspect, s v agreement, copula form beyond ‘is’
CG06	3	TL word order, copula ‘is’, thematic verbs, some agreement, non-productive aspect
CG07	3	TL word order, copula ‘is’, some agreement/tense, auxiliary ‘is’ without ing
CG11	3	TL word order, copula, little agreement, tense/aspect, pronouns
CG16	3	TL word order, copula ‘is’, some agreement/tense, auxiliary emerges
RAG06	3-4	TL word order, copula beyond ‘is’, some tense/aspect, agreement, ‘there’
FRG07	3-4	TL word order, copular beyond ‘is’, agreement with ‘be’ forms
RAG03	4	TL word order, tense/aspect agreement with ‘be’, ‘it’ for time and weather
RAG05	4	TL word order, copula beyond ‘is’, ranges of auxiliary, simple subordination
CG05	4	TL word order, copula beyond ‘is’, simple subordination, there/is, pronouns
CG12	4	TL word order, range of auxiliaries, agreement, ‘there’ and ‘it’, subordination

Table 5.18 Totals of OG stages at the pre-test

Initial stage at pre-test	Experimental Group		
	Family Reading	Reading Alone	Control Group
0	1	-	2
1	-	1	2
2	4	1	5
2-3	-	1	3
3	-	-	4
3-4	2	1	1
4	-	2	2
Sum	7	6	19
Total		32	

From the tables we see that at pre-test the learners ranged from stage 0 (total beginners) to stage 4 (advanced learners); no Stage-5 learners were found in any group. In both groups, there were beginners at stage 0 and 1. Half of the learners in both groups were still below stage 2 under OG criteria, which means the data obtained from this study show very early stages in terms of the learners' L2 English development. Most of the learners were between stages 2 and 3, where functional morphology begins to emerge with the development of syntactic complexity.

Through Organic Grammar criteria, although not all learners progressed to the next stage in the post-test or delayed post-test, more than half of the cases did show morpho-syntactic improvement. In the experiment groups, ten out of thirteen (76.92%) of the learners advanced, but only ten out of nineteen (52.63%) learners advanced in the control group. The difference is statistically significant using chi-square test ($p=0.003$). Therefore, we can say that the family reading group performed significantly better than the reading alone group. More evidence of the verb development will be presented in the following sections, e.g. see Tables 5.19.

Table 5.19 Number of improving cases (Organic Grammar criteria)

Improving Cases							
Experiment Groups (N=13)				Control Group (N=19)			
Student	Pre-test	Post-test	Delayed Post-test	Student	Pre-test	Post-test	Delayed Post-test
RAG01	1	1	1-2	CG08	0	0	1
FRG02	2	3	3	CG09	0	1	1
FRG03	3	3-4	3-4	CG03	1	1	2
FRG04	2	3	3	CG04	1	2	1
FRG05	2	2-3	2-3	CG02	2	2-3	1
FRG06	2	2	2-3	CG14	2	2	3
RAG02	2	2	2-3	CG15	2	2-3	2
RAG04	2-3	3-4	3-4	CG19	2	3	3
RAG06	3-4	4	4	CG10	2-3	3	3
FRG07	3-4	4	4	CG17	2-3	3	3
Total (%)		10 (76.92%)		Total (%)		10 (52.63%)	

Non-Improving Cases							
Experiment Groups (N=13)				Control Group (N=19)			
Student	Pre-test	Post-test	Delayed Post-test	Student	Pre-test	Post-test	Delayed Post-test
FRG01	0	0	0	CG01	3	2	3
RAG03	4	4	3-4	CG05	4	4	4
RAG05	4	4	4	CG06	3	3	3
				CG07	3	2-3	3
				CG11	3	3	3
				CG12	4	4	4
				CG13	2	2-3	2-3
				CG16	3	2-3	2-3
				CG18	2	2	0
Total (%)		3 (23.08%)		Total (%)		9 (47.37%)	

Some of the examples of the cases which improved in the post-test and delayed post-test data are presented here, e.g. in the case of CG02, who moved from stage 2 to stage 3.

- (61) (Pre-test)
- Mary and she’s mother in living room.
- Mary siting chair, Looking Book and
- wathing TV. Mary and mother are talking
- mother say to ningit can rainy, mother
- talk she’s umbrella go to school (CG02)

(Post-test)

Tom and Peter ^{are} looking TV,
Ann see John sleeping,
Mary ^{is} writing she home work

(CG02)

(62) (Pre-test) Have one she 在 watching TV. (CG04)
(be-Ving)

(Post-test) There is do his homework. (CG04)

(63) (Pre-test) She is look the TV. The comput on the dask. (FRG02)

(Post-test) Bob is reading a book now. (FRG02)

(64) (Pre-test) Her mother is take clothes.(FRG04)

(Delayed Post-test) They are going to school. (FRG04)

(65) (Pre-test) Please see sentence (19).

(Delayed Post-test) Amy is good girl. Jack is good boy. Joe slping. (RAG01)

(66) (Pre-test) One girl is watching TV and watch newspaper. (FRG05)

(Delayed Post-test)

Today is a good day. Mr. Ree is a teacher, he is teach his students. but Joe is sleeping, so Jack went to call Joe ^(get up) 起床. Amy is write her homework. They's class have a map and a pie and grapes. Then teacher say: "say 'English!'", but no one say; so teacher is not happy.

(FRG05)

(67)(Pre-test) My famliys are mother, father and me. (RAG04)


(Delayed Post-test)

- It is 2006 February 14th at the morning
- Teacher Mr. Ree is teaching Studen Joe. Jack and Amy
- Amy is studying, but Joe is sleeping and Jack is playing Joe's head
- Jack and Joe are boys, Amy is a girl.

(RAG04)

(68) (Pre-test) The man is finding his close, the woman is watch TV. (RAG06)


(Post-test)

- Today is January 10th, It is nine o'clock in the morning.
- Ann comes back, yesterday she went to the party.
- Mary is doing her homework, yesterday she went to see movie.
- Bob is reading a book, yesterday he went the  (library).
- Peter is watching TV, yesterday he was did his homework.
- John and Tom is sleeping, yesterday they went to see the play.
- Ron is boring, because he did all the thing yesterday!
- Monster is boring too, because Ron doesn't want to play with it!

(RAG06)

(69) (Pre-test) Candy sit down the chier. The computer under the table. (CG19)

(Post-test)

- It is nine o'clock
- John is sleeping.
- Peter is watching T.V.
- Mary is writing homework.
- There are seven  (People)

(CG19)

Although it is exciting to see these learners improved in such a short time, I have to admit it is likely that the advancement of the stages could result from the learner's natural improvement by following the school English curriculum or their private/after-school English sessions, rather than the benefit from reading, since the control group also showed more than 50% of improving cases. As a matter of fact, CG improvement seemed to illustrate this. Further research can look at individual reading group learners and relate their improvement directly to their reading – what they actually did. Future research can also look at whether those CG children who improved, a) received cram school lessons and (if possible) b) had a better attitude on the pre-test.

5.2.4.3 Number of verbs

One of the most important developments for L2 English learners is their verb acquisition (Myles, 2005). Although I looked at all verbs, auxiliaries, copula, modal and main verbs, I will not present all the data here because some of the data still need more investigation. I will only present the data on the number of verbs, finiteness of verbs and copula, auxiliary and thematic verbs. Myles (2005) compared L1 English/L2 classroom French learners' oral narrative production (after a one year interval) and found that learners supplied significantly more verbs on the post-test. This was similar to the present study. This led me to examine if there is difference in use of verbs among the groups. The examination showed that more learners in the family reading group produced more verbs in the post-test ($p=.018$) and delayed post-test ($p=.025$) than in the pre-test (Figure 5.1). The other two groups made no significant differences.

Table 5.20 Raw numbers of verbs by three groups

Learner	Pre-test	Post-test	Delayed post-test	Learner	Pre-test	Post-test	Delayed post-test
FRG01	0	1	0	CG04	4	7	2
FRG02	2	8	7	CG05	22	16	6
FRG03	10	21	16	CG06	8	4	5
FRG04	6	9	9	CG07	12	9	5
FRG05	5	7	13	CG08	1	2	2
FRG06	2	5	6	CG09	0	1	1
FRG07	1	12	18	CG10	3	7	8
RAG01	3	0	3	CG11	7	11	13
RAG02	4	14	8	CG12	13	9	7
RAG03	9	22	16	CG13	11	18	10
RAG04	3	15	11	CG14	3	3	5
RAG05	11	8	11	CG15	7	5	6
RAG06	8	25	23	CG16	6	5	3
CG01	2	2	2	CG17	9	15	11
CG02	7	5	1	CG18	1	3	0
CG03	1	1	2	CG19	2	8	10

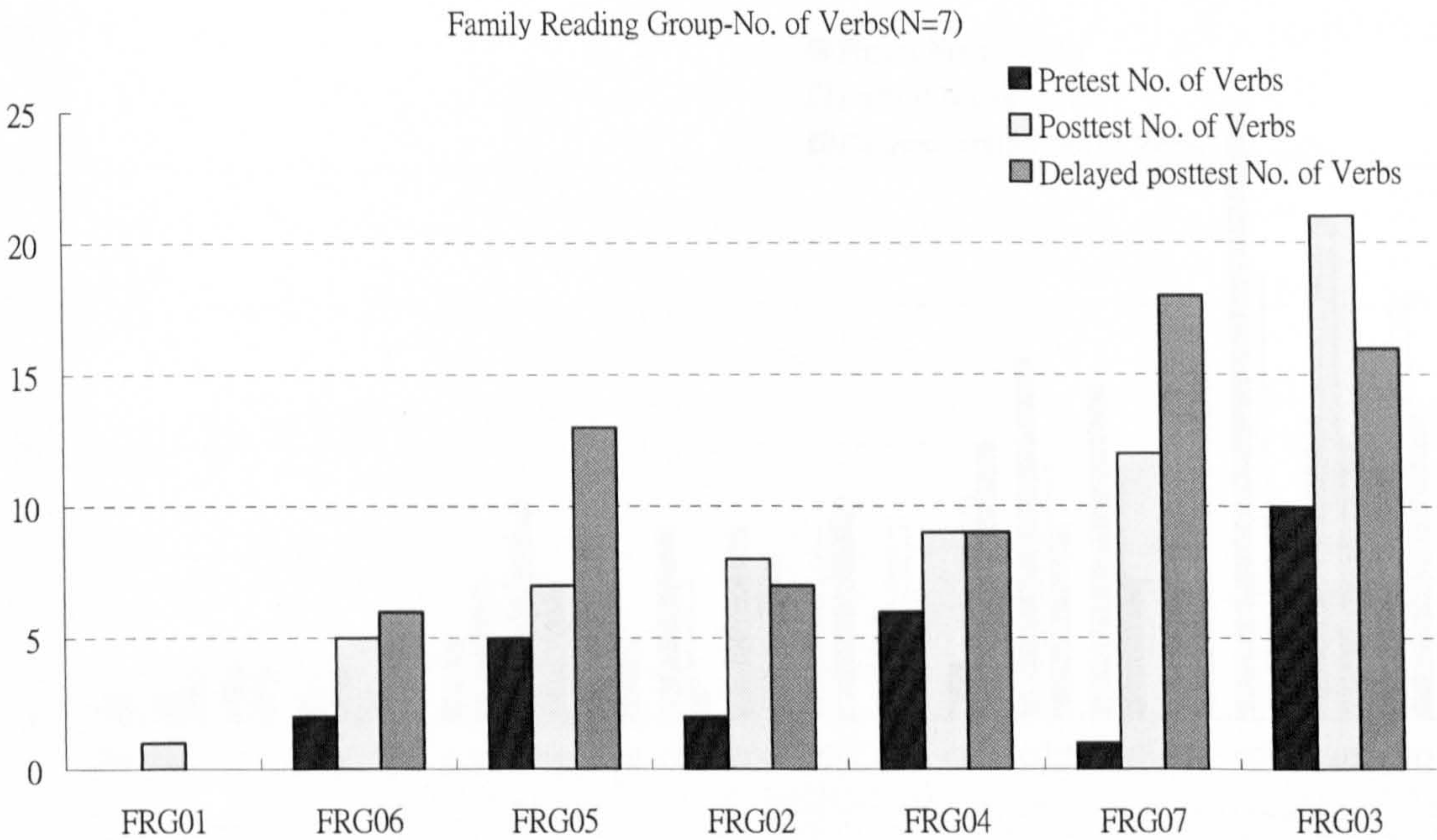


Figure 5.1 Number of verbs used in three tests of family reading group (N=7)

Reading Alone Group-No. of Verbs(N=6)

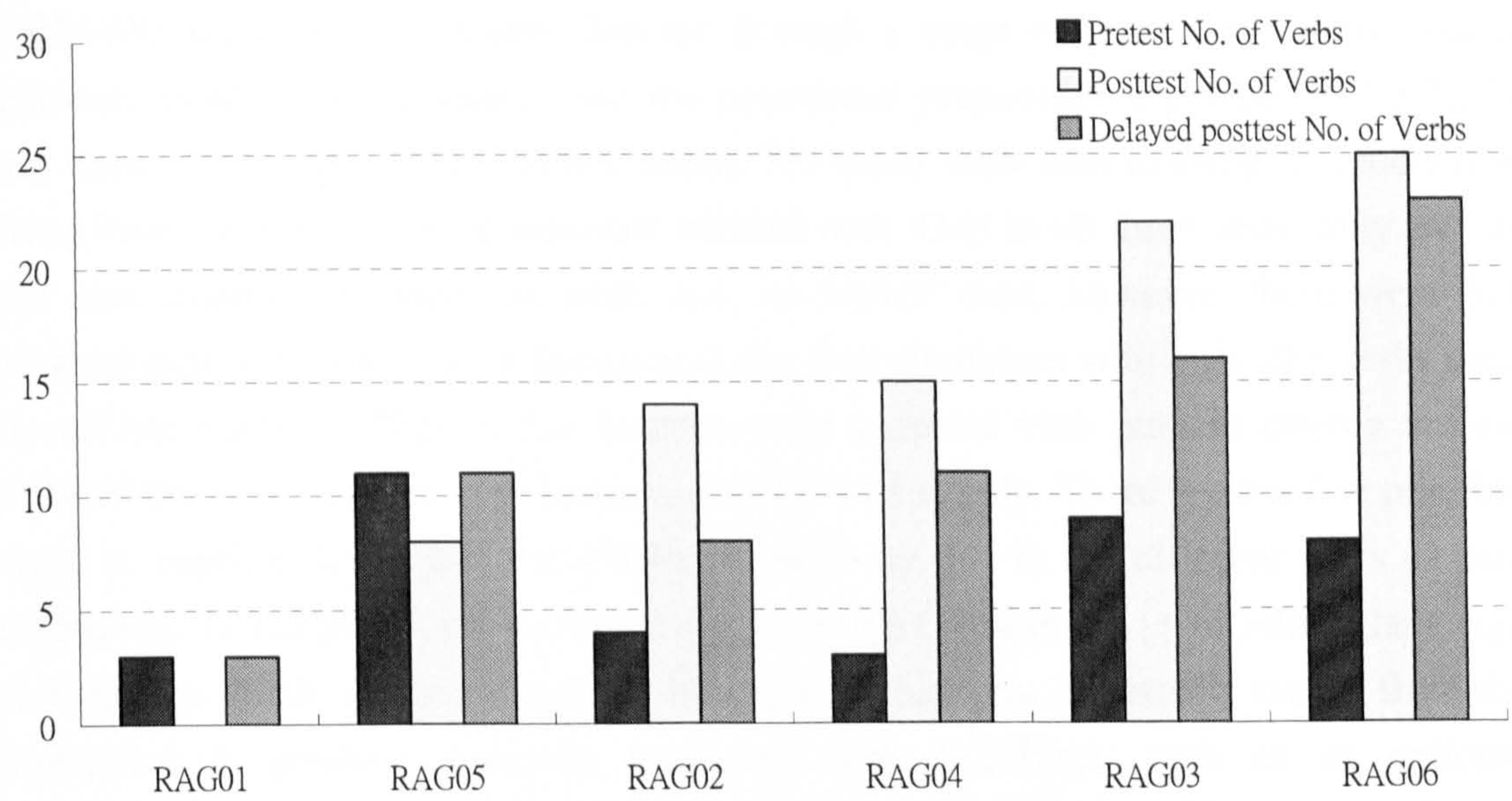


Figure 5.2 Number of verbs used in three tests of reading alone group (N=6)

Control Group-No. of Verbs(N=19)

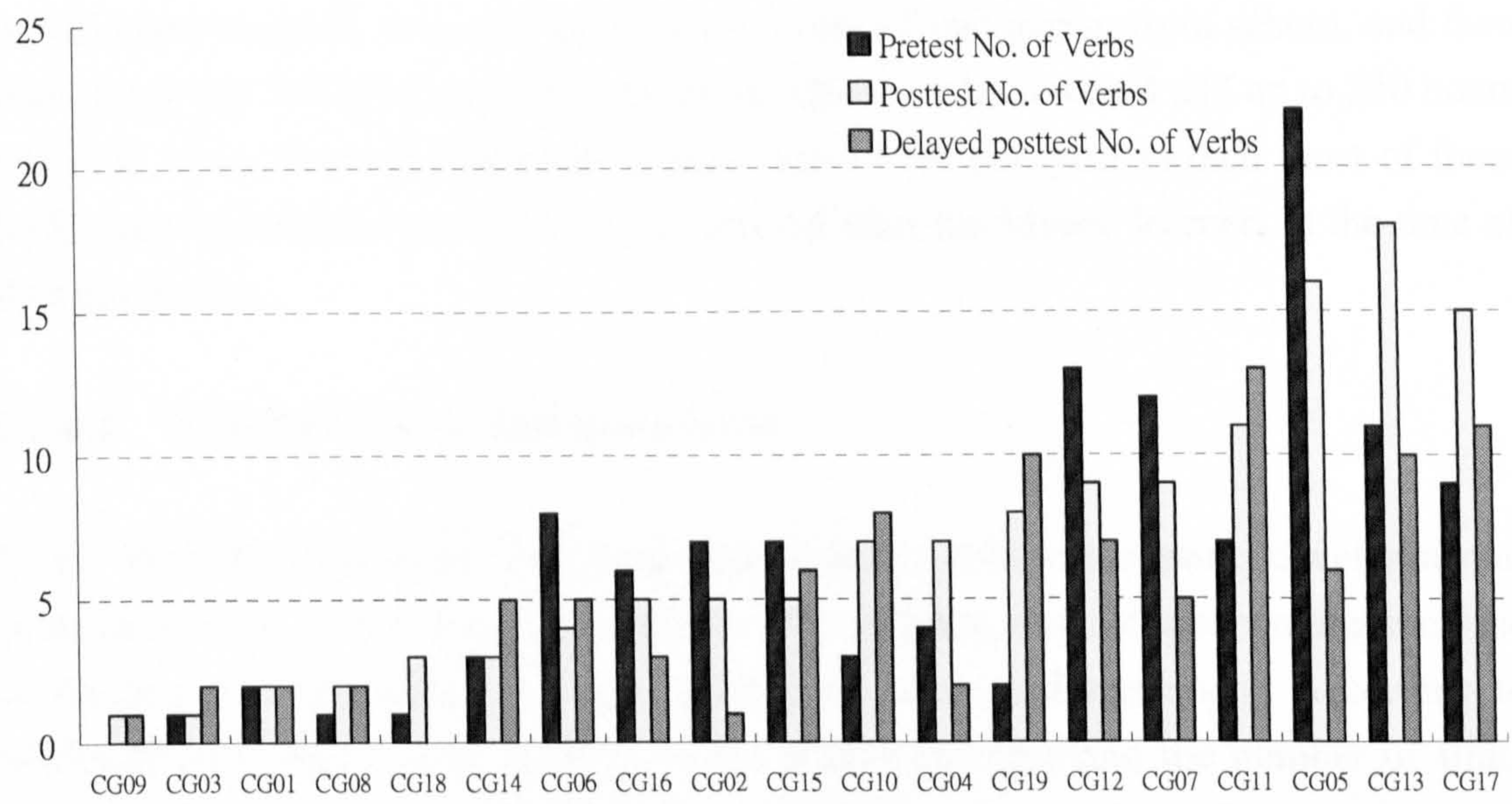


Figure 5.3 Number of verbs used in three tests of control group (N=19)

From the pre-test results we see that there was an increase in the experimental groups' production and an actual decrease for the control group, which might suggest that the learners were more willing and able to express themselves in English after reading or that they had become used to expressing opinions with their parents.

There were some differences between the two studies though. Myles' findings (2005:98) suggest that learners first go through a stage of projecting single lexical phrases, usually noun phrases, with the occasional prepositional phrase (in 2.5.3). In my data, there were 32 utterances where the main verb was missing in production from nine learners (the total sentence number was 434) in all three tests; only two of the nine learners belonged at stage 0-1. In Myles' data, however, there were 511 propositions in total (from 14 learners) at the first elicitation with only 285 verbs used by all her subjects. That is, her learners only supplied verb phrases overtly around 55% of the time, whereas my learners had 93% of supply. There were a few possible ways to explain this difference. Firstly, it might be due to the different ways of data collection, as mentioned above. Secondly, although Chinese is a [+ pro-drop] language (a language in which the subject can be omitted), learners are usually taught from the beginning to produce complete sentences with a subject, verb or an optional complement when they start learning English at school. This probably accounts for the rare missing subjects or verbs in the data. Finally, it could be these learners had had more exposure, including cram schools, to English at pre-test. Myles' learners had had approximately 141 hours of tuition before the first elicitation task, and received a further 254 hours approximately before the second elicitation. In my study, learners would approximately receive eighty hours a year of instruction from school, and then maybe another 160 hours a year at the cram schools, which would add up to 240 hours per year. If my learners had been to cram school for one year (which most of them had), they would have had a lot more exposure than the Myles' learners at the time of first elicitation.

5.2.4.4 Non-finite verbs and finite verbs

In L2 English acquisition, OG holds that learners follow the same developmental route as in L1A, with a decrease in the use of non-finite, and a corresponding increase in the use of finite verbs, i.e. those marked for tense and agreement. According to Myles (2005), the number of finite verbs should decrease and the number of non-finite verbs should increase in L2 acquisition. Regarding the number of non-finite verbs used in the three tests, the only significant improvement made was by the family readers. More family readers produced more non-finite verbs in the two post-tests than the pre-test (post-test: $p=0.27$, delayed post-test: $p=.027$). While comparing the number of finite verbs used in the three tests, more family readers again produced more finite verbs in the post-test ($p=.027$) and delayed post-test ($p=.041$) than in the pre-test, while the other two made no significant differences. Note that they also

produced significantly more verbs (Figure 5.1). Please see Table 5.21 for the raw numbers of the verbs on the next page and Figures 5.4 and 5.5 for visual presentation of the improvement of seven family readers.

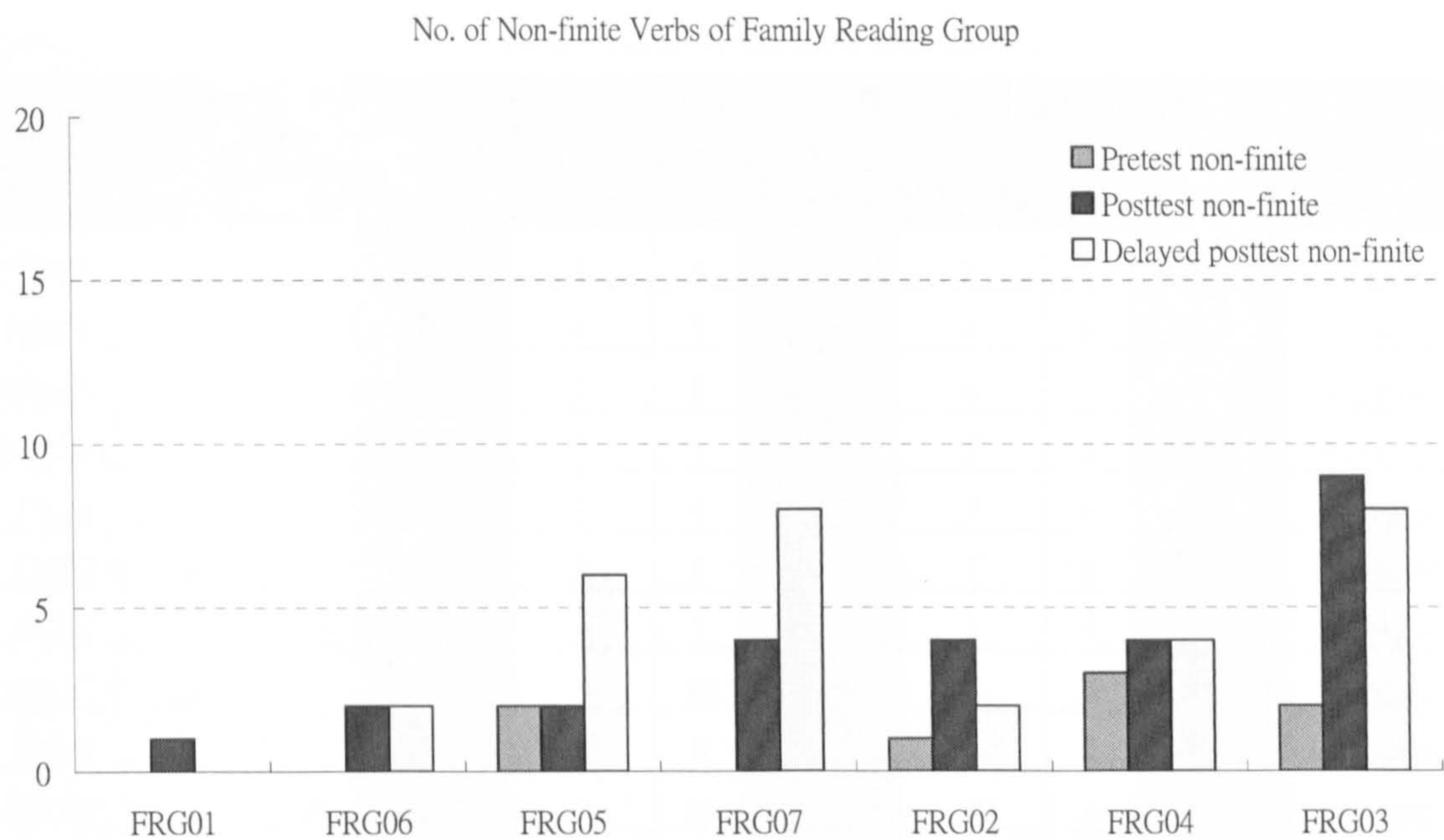


Figure 5.4 Number of Non-Finite Verbs used in three tests of Family Reading Group (N=7)

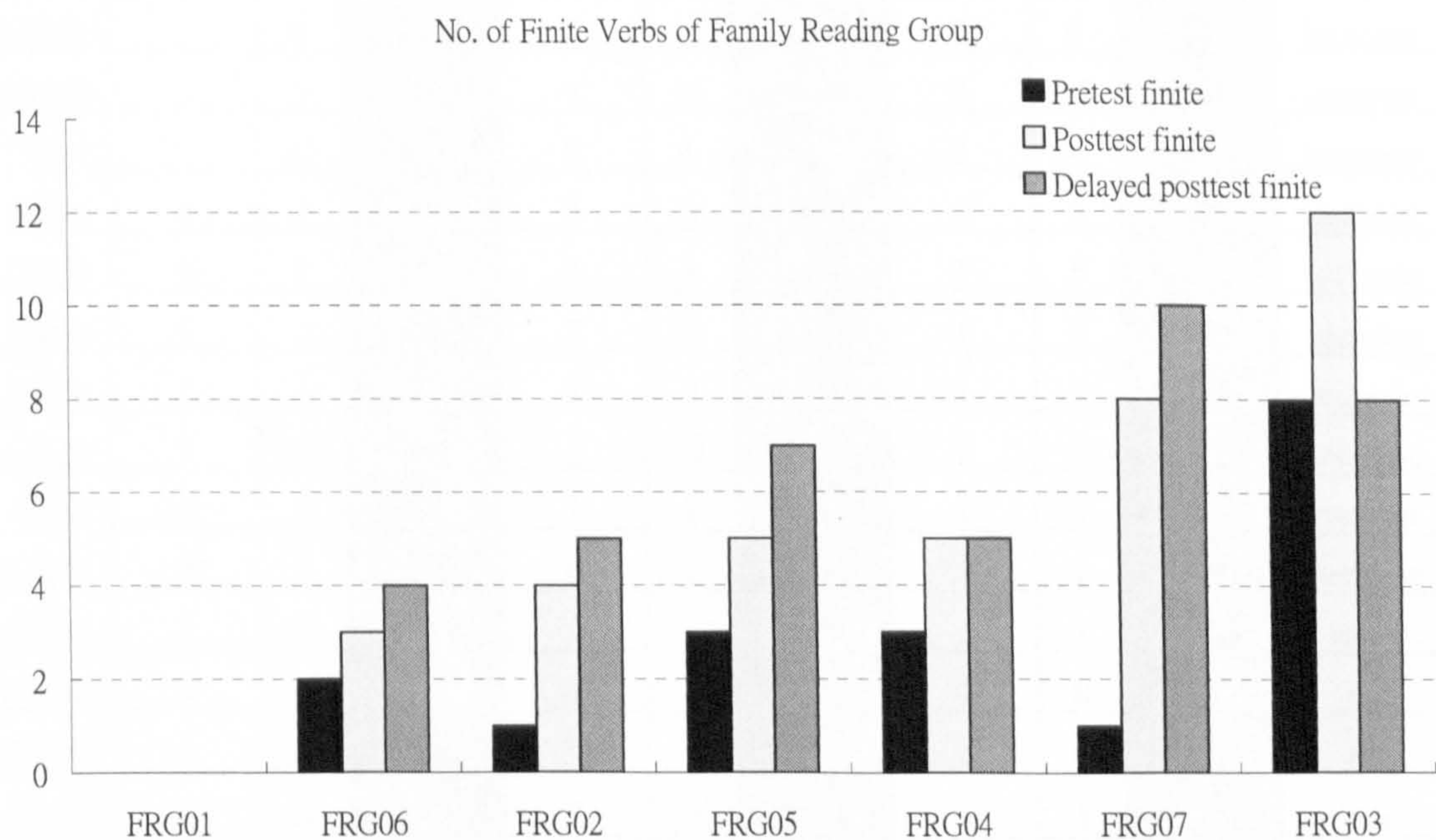


Figure 5.5 Number of Finite Verbs used in three tests of Family Reading Group (N=7)

Myles’ claim was only partially observed in my data. I calculated the untensed verbs in the obligatory inflectional contexts and then the tensed verbs. While comparing the ratio of non-finite to finite verbs per learner at the three tests, I only found nine learners had decreased ratio from the pre-test to at least one of the two post-tests (Table 5.21).

Table 5.21 Ratio of non-finite to finite per learner at the three tests (n=32)

Learner	Pre-test			Post-test			Delayed post-test			comparison (increase/ decrease)
	non finite	finite	n/f ratio	non finite	finite	n/f ratio	non finite	finite	n/f ratio	
FRG02	1	1	100%	4	4	100%	2	5	40%	decrease
FRG04	3	3	100%	4	5	80%	4	5	80%	decrease
FRG05	2	3	67%	2	5	40%	6	7	86%	decrease
RAG05	5	6	83%	3	5	60%	5	6	83%	decrease
CG11	6	1	600%	7	4	175%	7	6	117%	decrease
CG02	6	1	600%	3	2	150%	1	0	-	decrease
CG07	4	8	50%	4	5	80%	1	4	25%	decrease
CG17	12	7	171%	5	10	50%	5	6	83%	decrease
CG12	6	7	86%	3	6	50%	3	4	75%	decrease
FRG03	2	8	25%	9	12	75%	8	8	100%	increase
FRG06	0	2	0%	2	3	67%	2	4	50%	increase
FRG07	0	1	0%	4	8	50%	8	10	80%	increase
RAG02	1	3	33%	6	8	75%	2	6	33%	increase
RAG04	1	2	50%	6	9	67%	4	7	57%	increase
RAG03	3	6	50%	8	14	57%	7	9	78%	increase
RAG06	2	6	33%	9	16	56%	8	15	53%	increase
CG05	7	15	47%	8	8	100%	2	4	50%	increase
CG06	1	7	14%	2	2	100%	3	2	150%	increase
CG10	0	3	0%	3	4	75%	3	5	60%	increase
CG15	0	7	0%	2	3	67%	1	5	20%	increase
CG16	2	4	50%	2	3	67%	1	2	50%	increase
CG13	1	10	10%	6	12	50%	3	7	43%	increase
CG14	0	3	0%	1	2	50%	1	4	25%	increase
CG03	0	1	0%	0	1	0%	1	1	100%	increase
CG01	1	1	100%	1	1	100%	1	1	100%	same
FRG01	0	0	-	1	0	-	0	0	-	n/a
RAG01	3	0	-	0	0	-	3	0	-	n/a
CG04	4	0	-	3	4	75%	1	1	100%	n/a
CG19	2	0	-	3	5	60%	4	6	67%	n/a
CG18	0	1	0%	1	2	50%	0	0	-	n/a
CG08	0	1	0%	2	0	-	1	1	100%	n/a
CG09	0	0	-	0	1	0%	0	1	0%	n/a

There are three possible reasons for this. Firstly, the study period of three and half months was not long enough to show the improvement. Myles' (2005) study was one year. Secondly, the increase of the number of produced sentences tended to increase the use of all verbs. Also, a learner who produced more was prone to errors. These could become variables and influence the results. Finally, these learners were still at the optional infinitive stage where verbs could still be non-finite. The optional infinitive stage is a stage in which verb forms are sometimes inflected in finite contexts and sometimes not (Rizzi, 1994).

One thing to keep in mind is that owing to the small sample, one should not only pursue the significance of differences; instead, the development of individual learners should be carefully studied. As Myles (2005) observed, there is a large amount of variation across learners. Some of her learners used substantially more tensed verbs in the second test (and few untensed ones), while other learners made very little use of any verbs at all at Time 2. Therefore, it is necessary to look at individual differences. I use figures to present these (Figures 5.6, 5.7). I will discuss more about the delayed post-test results too. The pattern of the figures is arranged from the least usage to the most.

From Figures 5.4 to 5.9, we saw that learners in the family reading group used more and more finite verbs accordingly in the three tests, whereas in the reading alone group, learners used more in the post-test, and in the control group, a pattern was difficult to observe.

No. of Finite Verbs of Reading Alone Group

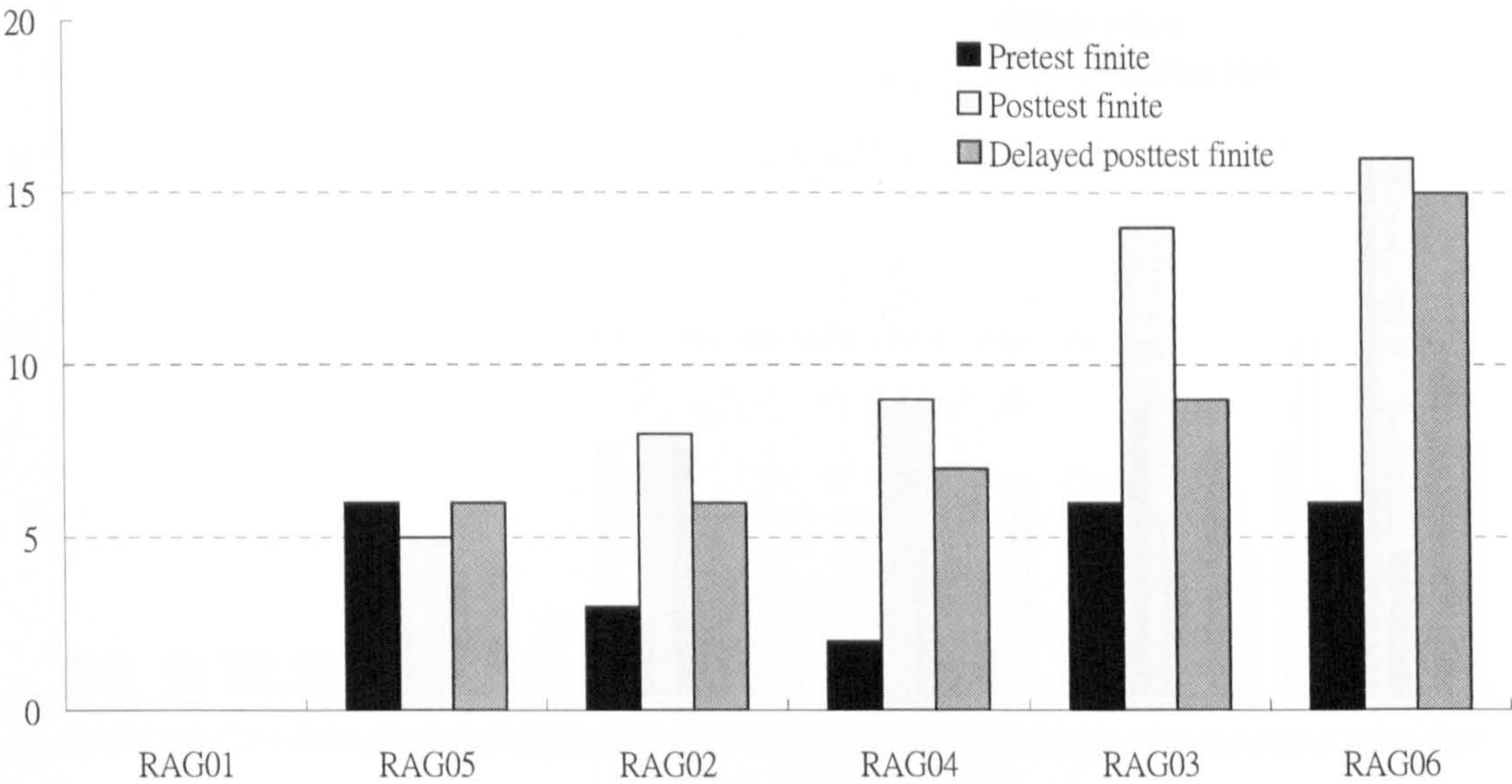


Figure 5.6 Number of finite verbs used in three tests for reading alone group learners (N=6)

No. of Non-finite Verbs of Reading Alone Group

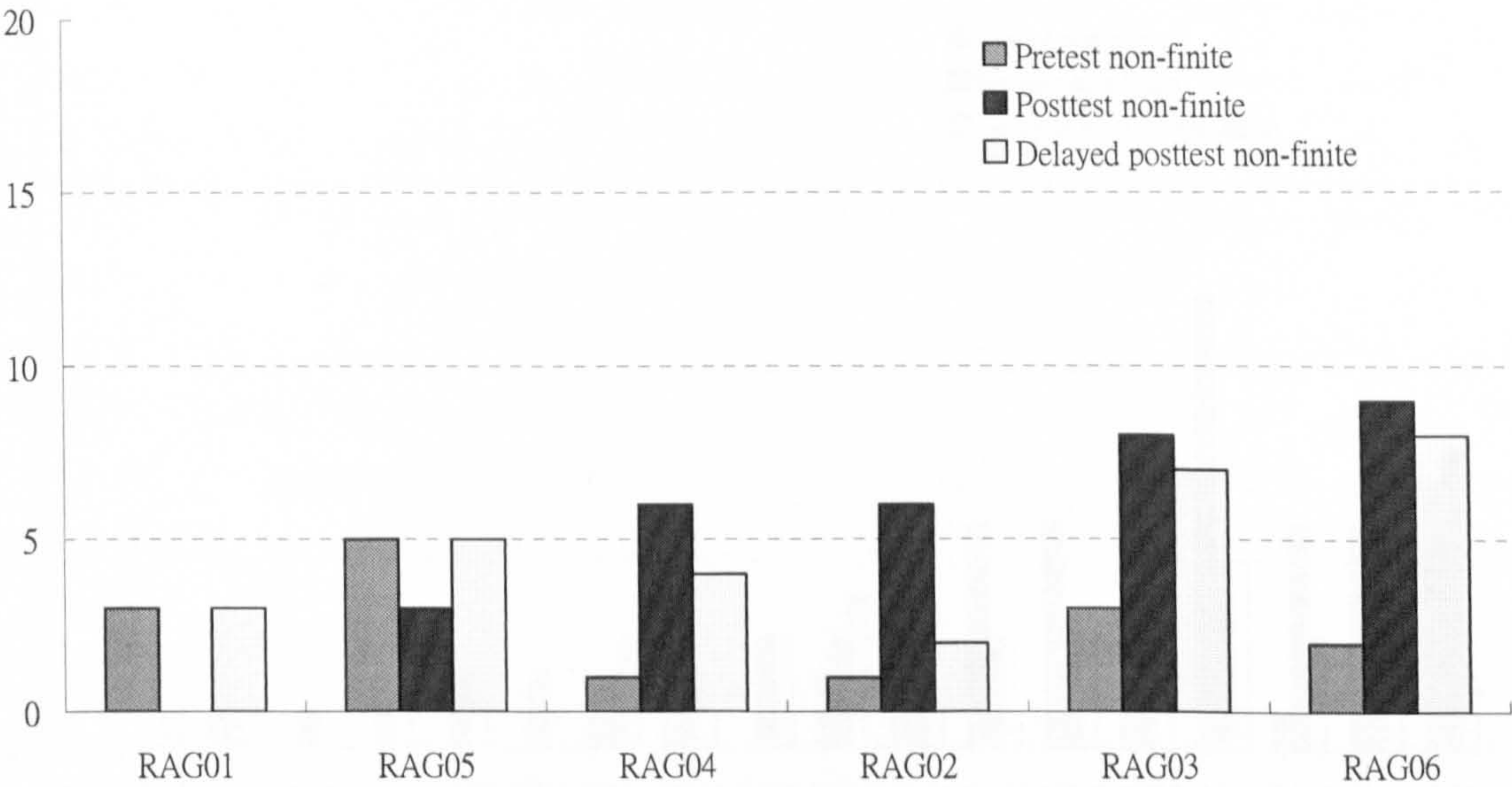


Figure 5.7 Number of non-Finite Verbs used in three tests of Reading Alone Group (N=6)

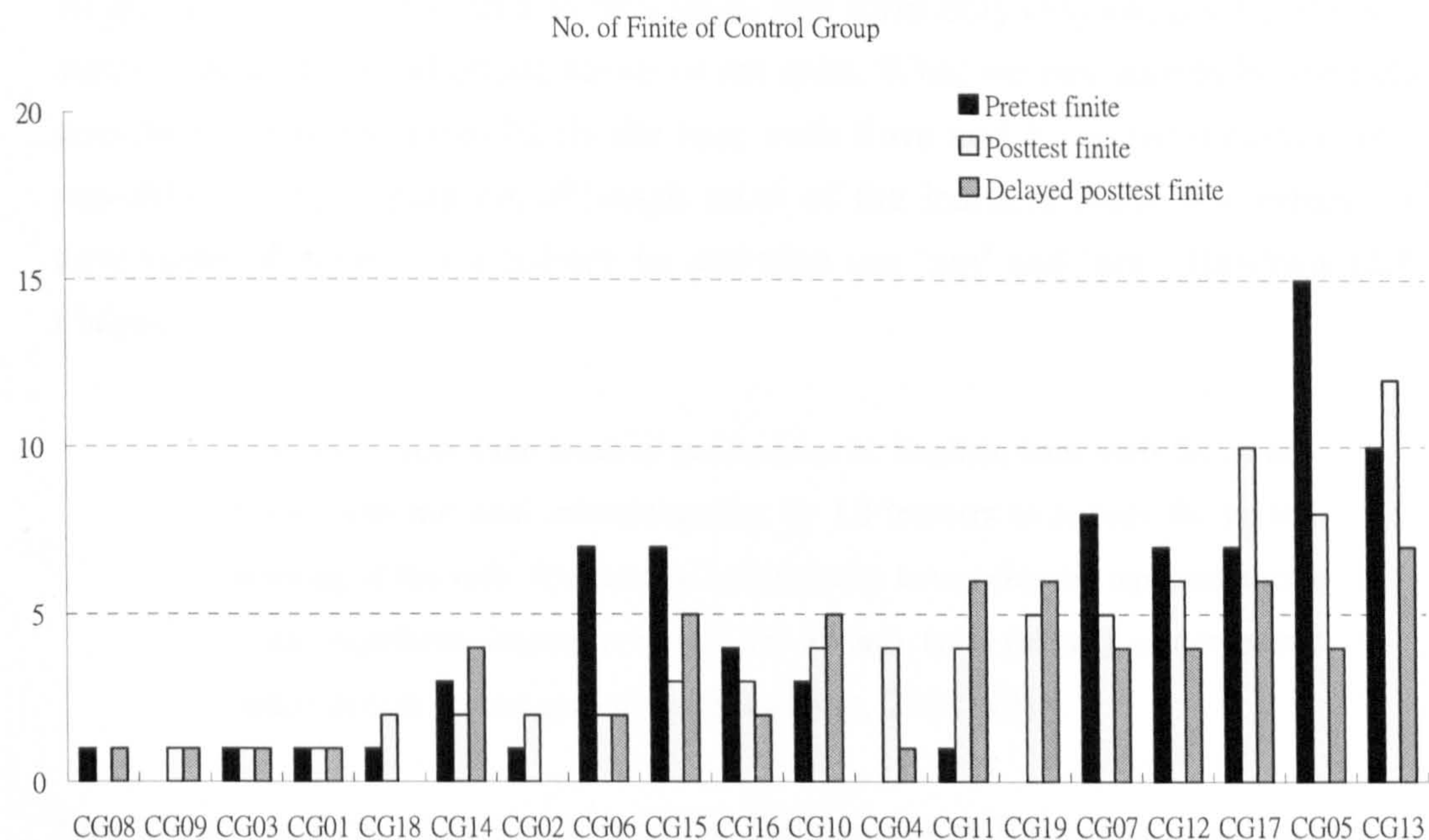


Figure 5.8 Number of Finite Verbs used in three tests of Control Group (N=19)

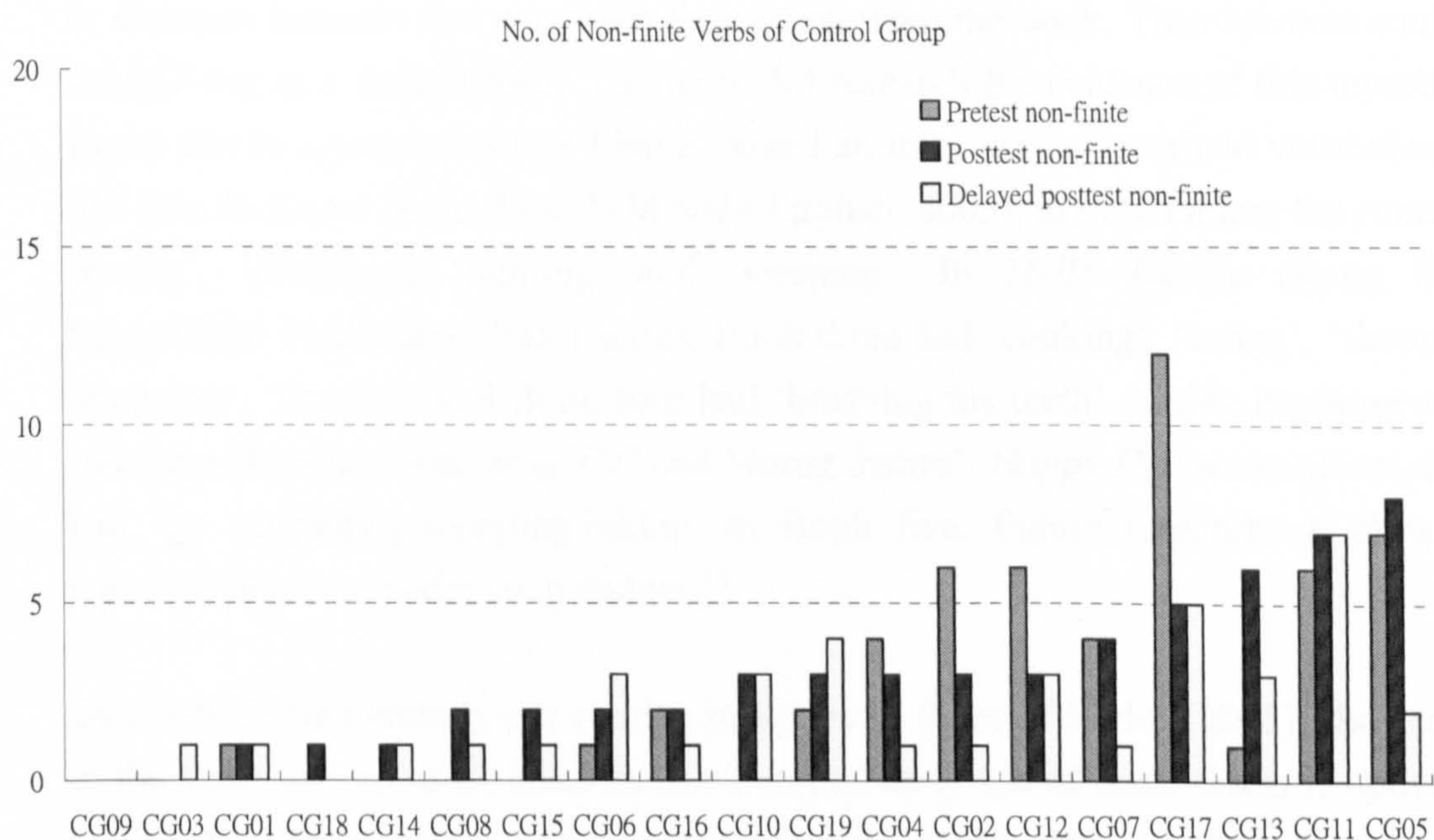


Figure 5.9 Number of Non-Finite Verbs used in three tests of Control Group (N=19)

At an early stage, verbs tend to be used in one form only (Myles, 2005:102). Very few verbs appeared with alternate forms in my data. What we can take to be the default or non-finite form was most likely the bare verb form and *V-ing* for thematic verbs and possibly 'is' for copula *be*, although most of the learners made few errors with the agreement of copula or auxiliary *be* and also use 'am' and 'are'. Hawkins (2001:59) claims:

at a low intermediate level of proficiency in English, bare verb forms and *V-ing* forms are used interchangeably by L2 learners to convey the lexical meaning of the verb. Speakers do not typically have syntactic representations to any significant degree for aspect (be talking), tense (talked), or agreement (talks) in their mental grammars. (Hawkins, 2001:59)

One point worth mentioning here is the form in vocabulary lists in some textbooks in Taiwan. Although vocabulary was commonly listed in basic word forms in textbooks (singular for nouns and non-finites for verbs), there are some textbooks in use which only list plural form and *-ing* form, directly taken from the stories in the books. One English teacher told me this is common and her learners always wrote the *V-ing* form in dictation because that was what they knew from the book. Thus learners could be using *V-ing* as a default form. I actually did research for evidence of this myself and found that in seven series that I have looked at, three series contained vocabulary list like this. In *Smart Basic Book 3* (Melody English, 2005), the vocabulary list contained 'eating', 'drinking', 'running' and 'sleeping'. In *Hello Darbie* (Kang Shuen Educational Publishing, 2004) series, Book three had 'cooking', 'eating', 'shopping', 'studying', 'dancing, and Book four had 'brushing his teeth', 'doing his homework', 'taking a shower', 'watching TV' and 'doing dishes'. *Happy Day* series (Nani, 2002) had 'go swimming/shopping/biking' in Book five. Future research on classroom learners should consider such factors.⁸¹

To conclude this section, my results, in line with those of Myles (2005), showed that in the same way as in L1 learners, L2 learners' early use of finite forms is optional at the start of acquisition, and the use of finite verbs clearly increases over time, especially for some learners, in my case, the family reading group learners.

Learners' verbs develop after the emergence of finite marking and this is also when children start acquiring grammatical morphemes. In the following section, we will turn to discussion of the learners' use and development of verbs.

⁸¹ Selinker (1972) notes this as 'transfer of training'.

5.2.4.5 Copula *be*, auxiliary *be* and thematic verb

Hawkins (2001:64) argues that early-stage learners start acquiring grammatical morphemes from those free morphemes which are minimally specified with respect to the kind of complement they require. Copula *be* is the least specified of morphemes which can appear under the functional category I (Inflection) in English. Learners will only have to learn that it does not select a VP complement. Auxiliary *be*, in contrast, requires them to learn that it selects not only a VP, and no other type of complement, but a VP with a V-ing head describing an event in progress. Auxiliary *be* + *V-ing*, then, will appear fairly early in learners' mental grammars because *be* is a free morpheme, but it will appear later than copula *be* because it has more complex selectional requirements. In this section, I am looking at the development of copula *be* and auxiliary *be* and see if it supports Hawkins' hypothesis on how learners move from Minimal Trees⁸² (Vainikka & Young-Scholten, 1996a; 1998) to project functional categories in English L2. This is supported by the development of French by Myles' (2005:106) learners.

In Myles (2005), the learners showed an increase in the use of *être* 'be' from Time 1 (75 occurrences) to Time 2 (107 occurrences). As suggested by Hawkins, *être* makes an early appearance as a free grammatical morpheme in the data, especially as copula. Notice here again the variation across learners, with learners assigned to group (a) previously making more productive use of *être* than learners from groups (c) who do not seem to be using it at all.

I calculated the number of copula *be*, auxiliary *be* and thematic verbs in terms of misuses, which included missing and incorrect form in obligatory context. In my data, the means of each group were also increasing in the use of copula *be* and auxiliary *be*. This supports Hawkins' hypothesis. However, uses of the copula did not always exceed that of the auxiliary. The family reading group and the reading alone group seemed to use it slightly more than the control group. Individual variation was also observed, from a learner who used none at all to learners who used *be* more than eight to ten times. See Table 5.22 for details.

⁸² Minimal Tree: only lexical categories, which transfer from the L1, are projected initially. Functional categories develop later in succession, but are not transferred from the L1.

Table 5.22 Comparison of numbers of copula be, auxiliary be and thematic verbs

Learners	Pre-test			Post-test			Delayed Post-test		
	Copula	Auxiliary	Thematic Verbs []*	Copula	Auxiliary	Thematic Verbs[]*	Copula	Auxiliary	Thematic Verbs[]*
FRG01	0 [0]	0 [0]	0 [0]	0 [0]	0 [0]	1 [1]	0 [0]	0 [0]	0 [0]
FRG06	2 [0]	0 [0]	0 [0]	2 [0]	1 [0]	2 [2]	3 [2]	1 [0]	2 [2]
FRG02	0 [1]	1 [0]	1 [1]	0 [0]	3 [1]	4 [4]	1 [1]	4 [0]	2 [2]
FRG04	1 [0]	2 [0]	3 [3]	2 [1]	2 [0]	4 [4]	2 [0]	4 [0]	3 [3]
FRG05	0 [0]	2 [0]	3 [2]	3 [0]	2 [0]	2 [2]	2 [0]	3 [0]	8 [6]
FRG07	1 [0]	0 [0]	0 [0]	2 [0]	4 [0]	7 [7]	7 [0]	3 [0]	8 [8]
FRG03	4 [0]	2 [0]	4 [4]	5 [0]	6 [0]	10 [9]	3 [0]	5 [0]	7 [7]
RAG01	0 [1]	0 [2]	3 [1]	0 [1]	0 [0]	0 [0]	3 [2]	0 [1]	3 [3]
RAG02	2 [0]	1 [0]	1 [1]	3 [1]	1 [3]	6 [6]	4 [0]	2 [0]	2 [2]
RAG05	2 [0]	2 [0]	6 [6]	2 [0]	0 [1]	3 [3]	6 [0]	0 [1]	4 [4]
RAG04	1 [0]	1 [0]	0 [0]	3 [0]	6 [0]	6 [6]	3 [0]	4 [0]	3 [3]
RAG03	4 [0]	2 [0]	3 [3]	5 [0]	8 [0]	8 [6]	6 [0]	3 [0]	6 [6]
RAG06	4 [0]	2 [0]	3 [3]	4 [0]	3 [2]	13 [9]	8 [0]	0 [0]	14 [7]
CG09	0 [1]	0 [2]	0 [0]	0 [1]	0 [0]	0 [0]	0 [1]	0 [0]	0 [0]
CG18	1 [0]	0 [0]	0 [0]	0 [0]	0 [2]	1 [1]	0 [1]	0 [2]	0 [0]
CG03	1 [0]	0 [0]	0 [0]	1 [0]	0 [0]	0 [0]	0 [0]	1 [0]	1 [1]
CG01	0 [0]	0 [1]	1 [1]	0 [0]	1 [0]	1 [1]	0 [0]	1 [0]	1 [1]
CG08	0 [1]	0 [1]	1 [1]	0 [0]	0 [8]	2 [1]	1 [0]	1 [3]	0 [0]
CG04	0 [2]	0 [3]	3 [1]	1 [0]	3 [0]	3 [3]	0 [3]	0 [2]	1 [1]
CG14	2 [1]	0 [0]	1 [1]	1 [1]	0 [1]	2 [2]	1 [0]	1 [1]	3 [2]
CG02	1 [1]	0 [1]	5 [4]	0 [0]	2 [0]	4 [4]	0 [1]	0 [0]	1 [1]
CG16	1 [0]	1 [0]	3 [2]	0 [0]	3 [0]	2 [2]	1 [0]	1 [1]	1 [1]
CG06	2 [1]	2 [0]	3 [2]	0 [0]	2 [0]	2 [2]	0 [0]	2 [0]	3 [3]
CG15	7 [0]	0 [0]	0 [0]	1 [0]	2 [0]	2 [2]	4 [0]	0 [0]	1 [1]
CG10	2 [0]	0 [0]	1 [1]	1 [0]	3 [0]	3 [3]	2 [0]	3 [0]	3 [3]
CG12	3 [1]	0 [2]	4 [3]	3 [0]	2 [1]	3 [3]	0 [1]	3 [0]	3 [3]
CG19	0 [5]	0 [3]	3 [3]	2 [1]	3 [0]	3 [3]	3 [0]	3 [0]	4 [4]
CG07	2 [1]	2 [0]	7 [6]	1 [0]	4 [0]	4 [4]	3 [0]	1 [0]	1 [1]
CG11	1 [0]	1 [0]	6 [5]	4 [1]	1 [2]	7 [7]	3 [0]	2 [0]	8 [5]
CG13	10 [0]	1 [0]	1 [1]	6 [0]	6 [0]	6 [5]	4 [0]	3 [0]	3 [3]
CG05	6 [2]	4 [0]	10 [8]	1 [1]	6 [0]	8 [7]	2 [0]	2 [0]	2 [2]
CG17	2 [7]	5 [0]	12 [4]	4 [0]	4 [0]	7 [7]	4 [3]	2 [0]	5 [3]

[]: number of misuses (incl. missing and incorrect forms in finite contexts) of copula and auxiliary in obligatory contexts;

[]*: number of different thematic verbs

Table 5.23 Means of numbers of copula be, auxiliary be and thematic verbs

Learners	Pre-test			Post-test			Delayed Post-test		
	Copula	Auxiliary	Thematic Verbs	Copula	Auxiliary	Thematic Verbs	Copula	Auxiliary	Thematic Verbs
FRG mean	1.14	7 1	1.57	2	2.57	4.29	2.57	2.86	4.29
RAG mean	2.17	1.33	2.67	2.83	3	6	5	1.5	5.33
CG mean	2.16	0.84	3.21	1.37	2.26	3.16	1.47	1.37	2.16

Most of the learners seemed to be able to use copula *be* and auxiliary *be*. Of course, this might well be the result of instruction, because copula *be* appears quite early, i.e. the first semester (in year five for current study), in all of the textbooks proved by Taiwanese MOE. In the first year textbooks, learners have to learn sentences like, ‘*What’s that?*’, ‘*I’m eight*’, and ‘*This is a book*’, etc. However, the progressive aspect is generally introduced a lot later than the copula in third-year textbooks. Therefore, the earlier appearance of progressive aspect, I would suspect, is a result of direct instruction in English classes outside of school, which is always ahead of school schedules.⁸³ Also, as noted earlier, we know that some learners have been learning English for a long time and therefore, they have probably acquired functional structure. Learners could also be using the *V-ing* form without auxiliary *be* as their default, as mentioned above. From the numbers of misuses in the table, most learners seemed to be able to use the construction, with one exception CG08. That is, most learners either have acquired or were in the process of acquiring copula and auxiliary *be*, and there was no clear sign showing more misuses of the auxiliary *be* than that of the copula *be*.

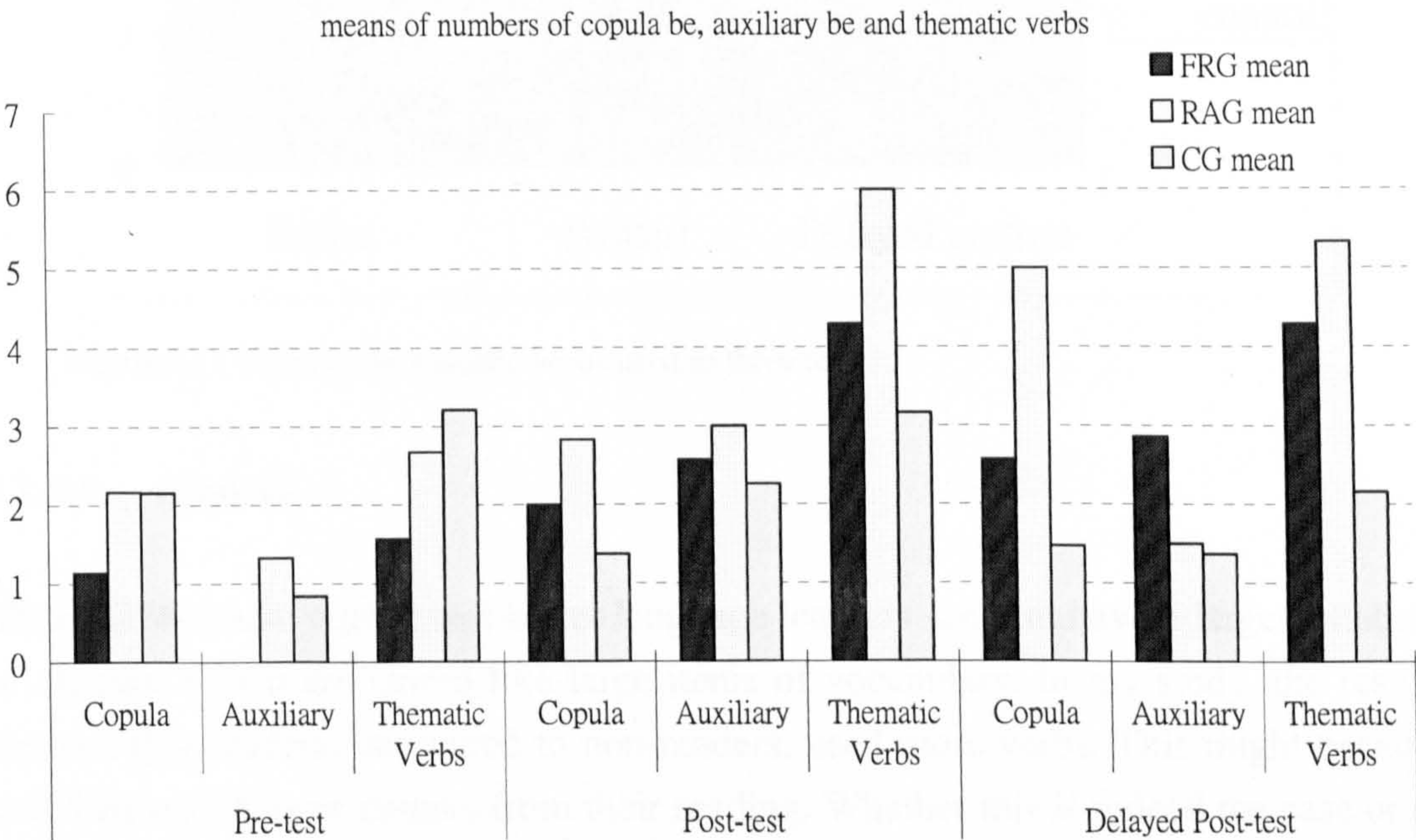


Figure 5.10 Means of numbers of copula be, auxiliary be and thematic verbs (group level) in three tests

⁸³ It is common in Taiwan that cram school lessons were always ahead of the school lessons. There are several possible reasons for this. For instance, children often come from different classes or even schools. In order to solve the problem of different lessons from school, cram schools therefore teach faster and more than schools. Parents send their children to cram schools for good school marks. If cram schools do not produce results, parents will not be satisfied.

Looking at the thematic verb usage, the two experimental groups used more of these in the post-test and delayed post-tests (Figure 5.11). The Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test showed that in the family reading group, there was a significant increase (more positive ranks than negative ranks) in the number in both the post-test ($p=.041$) and delayed post-test ($p=.043$), compared to the pre-test. Another significant difference was that in the control group, learners used fewer thematic verbs in the delayed post-test, which was given after the winter break, one month after the post-test, than in the post-test (more negative ranks, $p=.030$). The data seemed to suggest that exposure to books (PLD), not just instruction (control group) resulted in linguistic restructuring, i.e. acquisition, as one would expect.

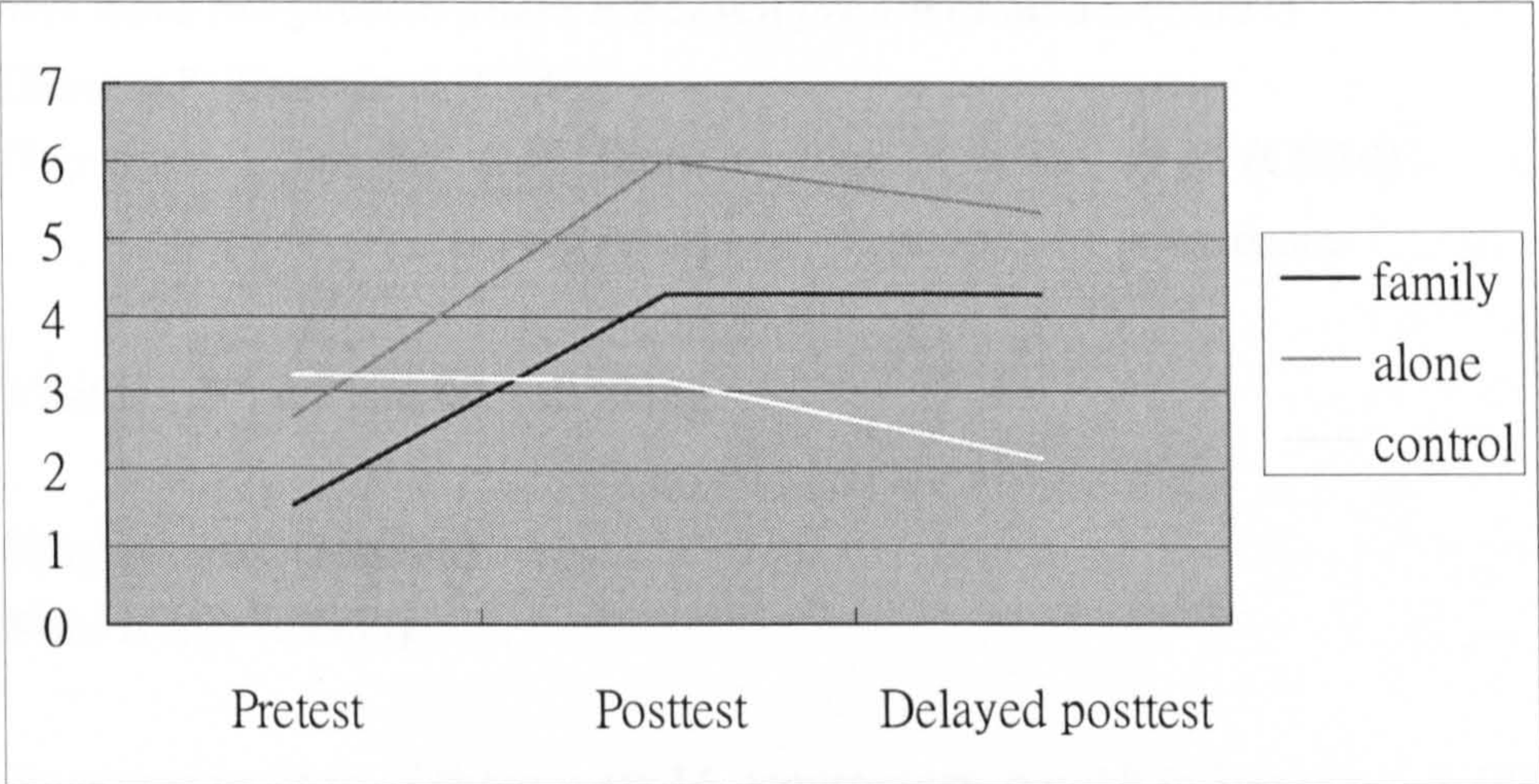


Figure 5.11 Number of thematic verbs used in three tests

5.2.4.6. Chunks

Myles (2004) also argues that better language learners seem to have a larger database of chunks, which are stored like large items of vocabulary. In my study, the results showed that readers, compared to non-readers, used more verbs. This might be because they had stored more chunks from their reading. Whether this is indeed the case or an effect of reading requires further research in the future. However, we can examine whether learners in this sample use chunks. Myles states that formulaic chunks are very important for beginner learners because they function as a base on which the learners can build their grammars. Although my original intention was to investigate how reading improves learners' proficiency via formulaic chunks which can be picked up from storybooks, it was difficult to do so. The first reason was similar to the problem of vocabulary analysis; learners read different books and thus received

different input and it was difficult to analyse what they had read and what they picked up after reading. Secondly, learners' use of chunks does in all likelihood not directly result from the reading project. Since CG learners show evidence of chunks, too. Such an investigation would have required a case study design.

There were, in fact, few clear instances of suspected chunks (34 in total). These seemed to show that learners were trying out some structures, e.g. 'There are....' 'It is' 'What is...?' These utterances took various target and non-target forms in the production from those eleven learners who used chunks, e.g. for 'There are...':

(70) *There are 7 people in the home.* (FRG05)

(71) *There are sleep? There is do his work* (CG04)

(72) *There have two preson. There are seven preson at home.* (CG07)

(73) *There is 7. There ie 4.* (CG09)

(74) *They are 7 人 in the 客廳. There are four 人 in the 教室.* (CG14)

Living room people classroom

For "What is...?", we had the following.

(75) *What is time?* (FRG06)

(76) *What is do?* (CG08)

When it comes to 'it is...' there were 16 occurrences, e.g. '*It is Time (e.g. 8.10)*', '*It is Day (Sunday)*', '*It is Date (10 January)*' and '*It is Person (Mary)*'.

Based on the frequent use of these constructions, I wondered if the learners had learned these as chunks. The common guidelines for these in Taiwanese primary English teachers' books can be illustrative. From the textbooks whose use is dictated by the MOE,

There is/are → first semester in the first year of learning (Year 5);

Time and number → second semester in the first year or first semester in the second year;

Weather adjective (sunny) → third year;

Progressive (V+ing) → third year;

Days (Sunday) → the textbooks vary widely, from the second to fourth year.

The first year of learning for the present study participants under the policy at the time of the study was their primary level Year 5 and so if the learners were only following

the school courses they should not have learned the structure of 'it is sunny/Sunday/time'. However, they should have learned 'there is/are' since this appears early in the textbooks and they may have learned it at cram schools. However, although the use of 'there is/are' should have already be taught, learners still produced these in non-targetlike utterances indicating memorization of this as a chunk and no understanding of use (or of acquisition). A few interrogative chunks were observed too, although there were too few cases to observe the development from formulaic chunks to target-like forms.

Differences in chunk usage between the two reading groups and the control group were difficult to analyse. There were only two learners who used chunks from family reading group, none from reading alone group and nine from the control group. Two of the family readers produced six suspected chunks in total (one in pre-test, three in post-test and two in delayed post-test), and the control group learners produced 25 (six in pre-test, ten in post-test and nine in delayed post-test). It is difficult to observe a pattern in the family readers' production, although FRG06 produced four sentences starting with 'it is...', including 'it is 9 o'clock.' 'It is January tenth.' 'It is 8.10.' 'It is morning.'

Probable use of chunks also makes it difficult to tell if the learners have acquired the progressive. Many learners produced both targetlike and non-targetlike forms in one test, e.g. CG07 wrote in the post-test:

(77) *Peter is watch TV.*

(78) *Mary is write homework.*

(79) *John is sleeping.*

(80) *Bob is read the book.*

He produced one targetlike sentence 'John is sleeping', whereas the other three were not. It would be difficult to say if he is using 'John is' as a chunk, and then 'sleeping'. Alternatively, he may not have acquired it yet and the whole '*John is sleeping*' is a chunk. It can also be X is (chunk) + VP, where VP has bare verb.⁸⁴ I would see this as a learner who is in the process of acquiring the form but still made errors in production. Myles (2004:159) argued that L2 learners start from larger units which they only analyse if they have to, and to go through a primarily referential phase using chunks and simple words, before entering the grammatical phase. This finding has

⁸⁴ Another possibility is the Aspect Hypothesis (Andersen, 1986), where -ing patterns with activity verbs. Both 'write homework' and 'read book' are accomplishment (see also (Rohde, 2007)). However, I will not discuss this further because this is considered beyond the scope of my thesis.

important pedagogical implications: chunks are useful to provide a databank of advanced structures, but learners must be encouraged to segment them.

Similar to Myles' learners (2004; 2005), there is a large amount of variation across learners in my data. Myles, Hooper and Mitchell (1998:352-3) summarise the results of their analysis of the breakdown of chunks in these very same learners and found that there was a clear developmental continuum among the learners as far as chunk breakdown was concerned, from those who started the breakdown process early and who had gone a long way down the road of segmenting the subject pronoun from the verb, to those who did not seem to have even started the process (Myles, 2005). Looking back at my data, it seems that the higher the level, the less the use of chunks, and a possible explanation for this is that the more advanced learners have already managed to break down the constituents in formulaic chunks.

Young-Scholten *et al.* (2005) point out the overgeneralization that results in errors is an indication that learners have begun to analyse inflectional morphology. Thus errors such as 'sunked' along with target forms such as 'looked' point to the productivity of past tense. In my data, there was no sign of this sort of overgeneralization from the 27 instances of past tense usage, only the chunk use described here.

From the above results, it seems to me that my subjects were using different kinds of chunks from the learners of Myles (2004; 2005). My learners seemed to produce very basic chunk structures like '*it is sunny*' or '*there are four people*', whereas Myles' learners were able to produce chunks which were semantically more advanced by combining two linguistic components, e.g. '*[comment t'appelles-tu] + [le garçon]*' (what's your name, the boy). My learners seem to tend towards the one-word stage in L1A and Myles' learners to the two-word stage. Chunks do vary in size/length and my learners seem to be just beginners in their development.

There is a final point about the test design that may have also contributed to chunk use. In order to initiate more written production, some of the phrases were provided in English in the post-test and delayed post-test. These phrases were only provided in Mandarin Chinese in the pre-test. The English translation of the phrases were: 'there is/are...', 'It is...o'clock/morning...', 'they are...' and 'He/She is...' (see section 4.8.3.6). Some of them were the Mandarin translations of chunks described above and therefore might have resulted in their use in learners' writing. However, while using these suggested phrases, learners still had to use their own knowledge of English to choose the right English phrase and then finish the sentence creatively. For example,

while given 'he/she is...', they could choose from many possibilities to finish the sentences. It could be 'He is + a boy' or 'He is + sleeping'. Moreover, while using 'It is...', they can produce sentences like 'it is eight o'clock', 'it is morning', 'it is sunny' or 'it is a classroom', etc, which requires them to choose the right phrase and complete it on their own correctly.

Although Myles (2004) suggests that learners start from a verbless stage, it did not show up in my data for nearly all learners (only two early stage learners had missing main verbs in the utterances, section 5.2.4.3). My argument is this is due to the nature of the written task (recall Myles used oral picture description) and to instruction. Learners tended to write complete sentences, with verbs.

One of the purposes of the current project was to improve learners' proficiency. Therefore, I would like to define 'outperform' in this hypothesis as 'improve more in terms of proficiency'. We will look at the learners from the results of the three proficiency tests. First, the results of the vocabulary test suggested no significant improvement, although the family reading group seemed to show more individual improvement. On the sentence restructuring task, the post-test showed no significant improvement among the three groups. However, children in the reading alone group improved significantly in the delayed post-test ($p=0.42$). Regarding morpho-syntactic development, ten of the learners from the experimental groups progressed to a more advanced OG level, as did ten of the learners from the control group. The difference was statistically significant. By looking at more details, the data seemed to suggest that family readers were more productive and used more verbs in the post-test and delayed post-test (section 5.2.4.3). The family readers also produced more inflected verbs in the post-test and delayed post-test than in the pre-test, while the other two groups showed no significant improvement (section 5.2.4.4). Independent readers also seemed to have a pattern of using more finite verbs in the post-test, while a pattern was difficult to see in the control group. Family readers also showed a significant increase in the number of thematic verbs in both the post-test and delayed post-test, compared to the pre-test. On the other hand, control group learners significantly used fewer thematic verbs in the delayed post-test than in the post-test (section 5.2.4.5). In short, the above data seemed to support the hypothesis that readers (the family reading group and reading alone group) outperform non-readers (control group) in terms of the results of proficiency tests, especially morpho-syntactically.

Finally, before we move on to the next hypothesis, I would like to investigate the relationship between proficiency improvement and reading amount. In theory,

learners who read more should receive more input and thus become more proficient and vice versa: more proficient learners are more likely to take to reading because they can understand more. Therefore, the next stage of investigation was to see if there was a correlation between the learners' total number of reading sessions and their proficiency results. Only 13 among the 29 reading group learners had complete OG profiles and thus the number of sample learners differs from that for the other two tasks. Unfortunately, no significant correlation was found to support my hypothesis (Tables 5.24 - 5.26).

Table 5.24 Pearson correlation between correct vocabulary (pre-test) and total number of reading sessions - family and independent reading groups

	N	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Correct Vocabulary Percentage (Pre-test) and Reading Frequency of Family and Independent Groups	29	-0.213	0.266
Correct Vocabulary Percentage (Post-test) and Reading Frequency of Family and Independent Groups	29	-0.262	0.169
Correct Vocabulary Percentage (Delayed Post-test) and Reading Frequency of Family and Independent Groups	29	-0.248	0.196

Table 5.25 Pearson correlation between correct restructuring percentage (pre-test) and total number of reading sessions - family and independent reading groups

	N	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Correct Restructuring Percentage (Pre-test) and Reading Frequency of Family and Independent Groups	29	-0.249	0.193
Correct Restructuring Percentage (Post-test) and Reading Frequency of Family and Independent Groups	29	-0.197	0.305
Correct Restructuring Percentage (Delayed Post-test) and Reading Frequency of Family and Independent Groups	29	-0.213	0.268

Table 5.26 Pearson correlation between OG stage (pre-test) and total number of reading sessions - family and independent reading groups

	N	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
OG stage (Pre-test) and Reading Frequency of Family and Independent Groups	13	0.516	0.071 ⁸⁵
OG stage (Post-test) and Reading Frequency of Family and Independent Groups	13	0.306	0.309
OG stage (Delayed Post-test) and Reading Frequency of Family and Independent Groups	13	0.273	0.367

My suspicion was that there was not enough reading being carried out during the project to examine the improvement of vocabulary and morpho-syntax structuring. In addition, there may be external factors, e.g. attitude, which exert an influence. Therefore, in the next hypothesis, I would like to examine if there is a correlation between attitude and proficiency.

5.2.5 Hypothesis 2c: Learners with a positive attitude have higher proficiency

It is often assumed a positive correlation exists between attitude and proficiency (e.g. Oller, Hudson & Liu, 2006). Therefore, this hypothesis examines the correlation between attitude and vocabulary achievement, between attitude and sentence restructuring achievement, and between attitude and OG stages. Only 32 of all the learners had complete OG profiles and thus the number of sample children differed from the other two tasks. Using the Pearson correlation test, I found significant results at 90% confidence level (Tables 5.27). This result indicated that it may be worth improving learners' attitude, which is one benefit claimed for the extensive reading approach: Krashen (1993) notes that learners can benefit by learning in a more relaxing way. This kind of programme thus should improve learners' affect, which correlates with their achievement. Since the correlation test does not show a causal relationship, we would need more research on this to determine the causal relationship. No significant correlation was found between attitude and the total number of reading sessions (pre-treatment questionnaire: $p=0.515$, post-treatment questionnaire: $p=0.102$).

⁸⁵ This is approaching significance.

Table 5.27 Pearson correlation between attitude and measurement

Vocabulary			
	N	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Attitude (Pre Experiment Questionnaire) and Vocabulary Achievement (Pre-test)	63	0.606**	0.000
Attitude (Post Experiment Questionnaire) and Vocabulary Achievement (Post-test)	63	0.351***	0.005
Sentence restructuring			
Attitude (Pre Experiment Questionnaire) and Sentence Restructuring Achievement (Pre-test)	63	0.456**	0.000
Attitude (Post Experiment Questionnaire) and Sentence Restructuring Achievement (Post-test)	63	0.330***	0.008
OG stages			
Attitude (Pre Experiment Questionnaire) and OG stage (Pre-test)	32	0.484**	0.005
Attitude (Post Experiment Questionnaire) and OG stage (Post-test)	32	0.343	0.055

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The above data suggested a possible relationship between proficiency and attitude; however, the attitude and proficiency did not correlate with time spent on reading. The relationship between time spent on reading, attitude and proficiency is clearly complicated and I would suggest this topic for future research. For instance, if we list the possible cause-effect relationship of the positive correlation between proficiency and attitude, we have four possibilities, as in Table 5.28. Higher proficiency can give a learner a better attitude, which leads two possibilities, situations A and B. In situation A, a learner may read more because reading is not difficult or because one likes English or reading. On the other hand, a learner might decide not to read because one does not think more input is needed or the books are too easy. A learner of lower proficiency may not have such a good attitude and thus is more likely to end up in situation D rather than C. Better attitude can result in higher proficiency because a learner is likely to spend more time learning the things one is interested in. Therefore, s/he may again, like situations A and B, read more or less. A learner with lower attitude probably would not spend much time learning and thus is likely to have lower

proficiency and find reading in English hard and dislike reading. Mobaraki (2007) observed from his own children that a vast amount of reading and high motivation had an effect on the learners’ morpheme production. We could also start the analysis from the total number of sessions, to proficiency and attitude or the other way round. Future studies could use regression to investigate the relationships among the three variables.

Table 5.28 Possible relationships among proficiency, attitude and Total no. of reading

Cause	Effect	Total no. of reading	Situation
Higher proficiency	Higher attitude	Read a lot	A
		Read little	B
Lower proficiency	Lower attitude	Read a lot	C
		Read little	D
Higher attitude	Higher proficiency	Read a lot	E
		Read little	F
Lower attitude	Lower proficiency	Read a lot	G
		Read little	H

However, we must not forget that there are other variables which may strongly influence the time available for reading, e.g. extra-curricular study at the cram schools or even music classes. Book selection may also influence how much children read or their attitude. If children cannot find books at their level or of their interest, they might not enjoy reading and read less, regardless their levels of proficiency and attitude.

5.3 Hypothesis 3: Parents will help provide English extra-curricular input at home.

5.3.1 Hypothesis 3a. Participants will achieve the expected reading length and frequency.

The study asked the participants in the two experimental groups to read 15 minutes at least twice a week. Close examination of the reading record revealed the fact that records were not properly kept. Among the 29 children in the experimental groups, 14 did not record the length of each reading (they only wrote down the date) and three recorded the length only a few times. This led to the impossibility of calculating their reading length and total reading time for statistical analysis. In the following description, I will simply utilize the data available to help me obtain a general idea about this hypothesis.

In principle, the participants should have read at least twice a week, which means the

total number of reading sessions should have been 28 during the study period (3½ months or 14 weeks). The records showed only two of the family readers (n=11) and five of the independent readers (n=18) of the 29 experimental group readers read 28 times or more (see Appendix 43). The means of each group showed that the total sessions of the reading alone group were slightly more than the family reading group. However, we could also see a very wide range of numbers, from single digits to more than 90. Based on these data, it seems to me that the reading frequency was not achievable by the participants.

Considering the records which gave the desired reading length of 15 minutes, although there was still individual variation among the participants, most learners read between 10-20 minutes each session. There were also records showing reading up to 50 minutes in a session occasionally.

From the above, the participants seemed to have difficulty fulfilling the reading requirements of the programme. Therefore, this hypothesis seems not to be supported.

5.3.2 Hypothesis 3b. Parents will use interactive methods to read with their children.

The results of the pilot study (section 4.3.3.6) suggested that parents used fixed reading methods during joint reading, e.g. pronunciation correction, direct translation or repetition etc., in addition to other application problems. A parents' guidebook in Mandarin Chinese was designed and given to the parents of the family reading group and the reading alone group in the main study. The main aim of the guidebook was to prevent use of these strategies by providing information on various reading methods, different strategies and ways to help extra-curricular reading work smoothly. This was in itself a pilot, so let us look at how helpful it was.

The fifth and seventh questions of the implication part in the post-treatment questionnaire asked about the usefulness of the parents' guidebook. In Q5 'the suggested activities in the parents' guidebook helped much', 10 (34.5%) out of the 29 parents from the family reading group and reading alone group chose 'no comment', 15 (51.7%) chose 'agree' and 'strongly agree', and four (13.8%) chose 'disagree'. The mean value was 3.59, and the standard deviation was 0.983. No significant difference existed between the family reading group and reading alone group. Around 70% of the family reading parents thought that the activities in the guidebook were useful but of the independent group parents, only around 60% thought so.

Question seven asked if the parents' guidebook met the parents' needs. Nine (31%) out of the 29 parents from the family reading group and reading alone group chose 'no comment', 14 (48.3%) chose 'agree' and 'strongly agree', and six (20.7%) chose 'disagree'. The mean value was 3.41, and the standard deviation was 0.983. The difference between these two groups reached significance, and the family reading parents scored higher than the others. That is, the family reading parents felt the guidebook met their needs more than the reading alone group parents. This result was expected, since the guidebook was designed mainly for family reading. However, from the telephone interviews with the parents during the study, I realised that only two parents had finished reading the guidebook and five read only parts of it; therefore, the results pertaining to the usefulness of the guidebook are not valid. Nonetheless, one of the parents told me she read the guidebook and she really liked the information given and encouraged me to keep trying because she agreed with me totally.

Even though most of the problems which have occurred in family reading projects in the literature were covered and discussed in the guidebook, the same problems occurred in this project because the parents did not read the guidebook. This might have resulted from the following:

1. The length: The 74-page book was too long and contained too much information for the parents to manage.
2. The style: The academic writing was difficult for the parents to read. It may have been more acceptable for the writing to be directly addressed to the parents, e.g. use 'you can / it is a good idea to listen to the storybook tape with your child' than 'the parent should/can listen to the storybooks tape together with his/her child'.
3. Psychological factors: The parents' low confidence might have led to their unwillingness to read with their children or model the reading in order to save face.⁸⁶ Or, they may have thought that the project was to improve the children's English, not theirs and therefore placed the responsibility on the children. They will have become used to sending their children to cram schools to learn and place the responsibility elsewhere, in this case on a professional body, at least from the parents' viewpoint.
4. Time: The parents were too busy at work and they did not have time to read the guidebook.

⁸⁶ In the Chinese culture, 'face saving' is an important issue. Parents are considered role models and children need to be respectful. For a parent, to maintain face is important because face translates into power and influence. Losing face will result in a degradation of parents' status in the family.

As an alternative to encourage parents, Arnold (2007) uploaded a sample of joint reading video recording (primary level, L2 English in Hong Kong) onto a school website for parents to watch and imitate after they came to school for a meeting once a year.⁸⁷ Unfortunately, the website set up for this programme to increase communication and information exchange was never used by the parents or the learners. Therefore, future researchers need work on encouraging parents to be involved and trained through various methods to find out which works best. In the present study, I also designed a website for communication, but none of the participants used it. Using multi-media resources may be convenient; however, at the same time, it may be more costly and require more training of the participants to use the resource effectively.

Many studies have shown that parent-child joint-reading can have positive influence on children's linguistic development, e.g. Beals and De Temple (1992) and De Temple and Tobars (1995) (see section 2.5.3). Therefore, let us now move to investigate how parents interact with their children in joint-reading. Eleven children handed in their reading tapes, which were used for analysis after full transcription (section 4.8.3.3). Although each session should have been around 10-15 minutes, the length of the recordings varied, from 10 minutes to longer than 30 minutes.

In my data, although there were eleven pairs of parents and children in the family reading group, only six parents were present in the taped conversation for children in this group. The other five parents were not present on the recordings; the contents of the tapes were children sounding out the texts alone. Half of these five children were reading books which were too difficult for them, which made them struggle throughout the tape recording session.

The six pairs of reading participants with a present parent belonged to the standard interaction type, according to De Temple and Tabors' (1995) interaction criteria (section 2.5.3), and five pairs of them were in the category of immediate talk (Beals & De Temple, 1992). The parents focused on word translation and pronunciation as well as raising questions for comprehension. There was hardly any non-immediate talk. These six parents also adopted a low-level/low-demand strategy during reading. In addition, standard interaction type was the only interaction pattern observed in this study; the other three did not occur. Example (81) below shows what the most

⁸⁷ Unfortunately, she did not talk about whether this was effective in her presentation.

common interactions were like in this study:⁸⁸

(81) The most common interaction of the present study

(Book title: *Little Hoot can't sleep*)

Mother: Haole... kaishio...little Hoot can't sleep.

'ok... let's start...little Hoot can't sleep'

Child: Little hoot can't sleep.

Mother: Sheme yisi?

What meaning

'What does it mean?'

Child: Yige xiaoxiaode maotouyeng ta shuei buzhaio.

A little owl it sleep negative (Neg)

'A little owl called Little Hoot, he can't sleep'

Mother: Mei bangfa...dueila...yesuan shuei buzhaio.... shuei buzhaiojiao.....

Neg method right kind of sleep Neg sleep Neg

It was a dark dark stormy night.

'Unable...right.....kind of can't sleep....can't sleep.....It was a dark dark stormy night' (FRG05)

Similarly, the interaction of family reading can be tracked / known by using the items in categories for verbal interaction in shared reading proposed by de Jong and Leseman (2001) (see section 2.5.3 and section 4.8.3.3). The verbal interaction which occurred in shared reading can be categorised by talk related to the illustrations, immediate content-related talk and non-immediate content-related talk. Meaning-related talk refers to comments, questions or responses by the child or parent that deal with the pictures in the text. Y. Zeng (2007) suggested this sort of discussion can improve grammar development through two steps.

First, the mother (or father) and the child discuss the illustrations in order to understand the content of the story. Specifically, the child learns vocabulary through comments and questions while looking at the pictures. For example, in Y. Zeng's (2007:57) data,

(82) Meaning related talk

(Book title: Unknown)

Mother: D shi sheme? Donuts shi tiantianquan

⁸⁸ Unfortunately, the date of reading was not marked on the recordings when they were handed in, although the researcher had asked them to. Therefore, the date of the reading could not be specified.

is what is donut

‘What is D? Donuts is donuts.’

Child: Donuts...mama weisheme meige zi houmian douyou yige s?

Mum why every word after with a(an)

‘Why do all the words have an s in the end, mum?’

Mother: Yinwei shi fushu mingci de guanxi.

Because plural form noun possessive (because)

‘Because they are plural nouns.’

Child: O, suoyi keyi shuo frogs, cars.

So can say

‘Oh...so I can say frogs cars.’

Mother: Duei

yes

‘Yes.’

In my data, I only found two examples relevant to picture talking, (83) (84).

(83) content-related non-immediate talk

(Book title: Where the wild things are)

Child: That very night when Max xxxx [unclear utterances] a forest green....

Mother: You need to look at your picture, OK?

Child: Ok... and grew....

Mother: Then?

Child: And grew... until he sailing xxxx with rice and the walls became all the wall around.....and an ocean humble by with ...private...boat for Max and he sailed...for night and day.....and in and out....and weeks...and almost over a year....to..ward...the world [wild] things are.

Mother: Now, do you have a look at your picture?

Child: Yap.

Mother: You see, and you look at your picture then. (FRG11)

(84) content-related non-immediate talk

(Book title: The firefly moon)

Mother: Sheme yisi... zhi you sheme jienlaile...

What meaning was there what came in

Zhiyou sheme jienlaile... ni kan

only what came in you look

‘What does it mean...only what came in...only what came in...look.’

Child: Yenghuochueng
firefly
'the fireflies'

Mother: Zhiyou yenghuochueng jienlaile...They settled around the nest...
only firefly came in
'Only the fireflies came in...they settled around the nest...' (FRG05)

These two examples showed that the parents only asked the child to look at the picture and did not discuss anything further. This probably did not help improve grammar, as opposed to what is suggested above.

Y. Zeng's second step for family reading was the point that immediate content-related talk facilitates reading comprehension and word recognition. Immediate content-related talk means comments, questions or responses by the child to the parent that deal with explicitly stated facts within the story. Under this step, references about explicit facts of the story were introduced by the parent. The discussion between the parent and the child about the content helps the child to understand the text thoroughly. An example from the present study is presented, in (85).

(85) Immediate content-related talk

(Book title: No big deal)

Father: Weisheme...Weisheme ta buyueng zhao ren lai xiouli?
Why why he neg find someone come fix
'Why...why doesn't he ask someone to fix it?'

Child: Because his computer.....not really.....broken.

Father: Xxxxx [unclear utterance]

Child: Bushi broken o?
neg

'It's not "broken?"'

Father: Broken shi dapole...podiaole.
Is smash become pieces
'Broke means to smash...break into pieces'.

Child: Huaidiao?
out of order
'out of order?'

Father: Diannao biengbushi podiaole...jioushishuo...meiyoubanfa guengzuo...
Computer neg smash only no way work
'The computer is not smashed....it is....not able to work...'

Child: O.....najioushi
That is
'Oh...that is...'

Father: Meiyoubanfa guengzuo
no way work
'out of order'

Child: Because....his computer...not really....doesn't work. (FRG07)

Non-immediate content-related talk refers to comments, questions or responses by the child or parent that are not an immediate reference to the text but instead involve inference, predictions, critical thinking, and external references. The idea is that external references of the stories not only assist comprehension but also encourage the child to use the language and knowledge in daily English conversation. The following example was taken from FRG07 with her father.

(86) Non-immediate content-related talk

(Book title: Famous places in Canada)

Child: Saint Eliot mountains...we are also going to go to Nigara falls...People divided Nigara falls on the Nigara River into two parts...the horseshoe falls are in Canada...but the American falls are in the United States...The Nigara River links Lake Eerie and Ontario and they are two of the America's greatest lakes...I just can't wait to go there...

Father: Wo jue de ni niande dou hen qiongchu.
I feel you read all very clear
Keshi yenwei zhege shi...zhe shi yige gushi...
But because this is this is a story
Suoyi wuluen shi niziji zainian huoshiyaojiangge bierentieng
so no matter is youtdrlg reading or tell other people
deshihou...meiyige juzi nage duanju dedifanga...
when every sentence that break place
yao bijiao qiongchu...yaobu ni yizhi nian
must comparative clear otherwise you continuously read
nage zhuengjian doumeiyou duan, tiengderen jiou jue de hen chili
that middle neg break listener then feel very hard
'I think you read it very clearly. But this isthis is a story...so whether you're reading to yourself or to others...you need to stop briefly after each sentence...be really clear...if you read it continuously without stopping, the listener will have difficulty following you.'

- Child: Jiou bu xiaode wo nian dao nali?
Then neg know I read to where
'Not knowing where I am?'
- Father: Duei... meiyige juzi huoshi duanluo yienggai shaowei tiengduen,
Yes every sentence or paragraph should a little stop
nage tiengderen cihuei bijiao zhidao ni jiangde dagai shiyige
that listener then comparative know you tell about a
zemeyangde gushi.
what kind story
'That's right. There should be pauses between sentences or paragraphs, then
the listener will know what kind of story you're talking about.' (FRG07)

(87) Non-immediate content-related talk

(Book title: No big deal)

- Child: Den's computer doesn't work.
- Father: En...shi Den's zhege diannao bunengs hiyueng ma....
Is this computer neg function question
dueibuduei?
Right or not
'yes... Den's computer cannot function...right or not?'
- Child: En.
yes
'Yes.'
- Father: Does Den have to call a repairman?
- Child:No, he doesn't have to call the repairman.
- Father: Weisheme....weisheme ta buyueng zhao ren lai xiouli?
Why why he neg find someone come fix
'Why...why doesn't he need to ask someone to fix it?'
- Child: Because his computer.....not really.....broken.
- Father: Xxxxxxxx [unclear utterance]
- Child: Bushi broken o?
neg
'It's not 'broken?'
- Father: Broken shi dapole...podiaole.
Is smash become pieces
'Broke means to smash...break into pieces.'
- Child: Huaidiao?
out of order

‘out of order?’

Father: Diannao biengbushi podiaole...jioushishuo...meiyoubanfa guengzuo...
 Computer neg smash only no way work
 ‘The computer is not smashed....it is....not able to work...’

Child: O.....najioushi
 That is
 ‘Oh...that is...’

Father Meiyoubanfa guengzuo
 no way work
 ‘out of order’

Child: Because....his computer...not really....doesn’t work.

Father: En....dian shishishang tade diannao biengmeiyou
 But in fact his computer not
 huai... dueibuduei?
 Broken right or not
 ‘Yes...but in fact his computer is not broken, right?’

Child: Duei.
 yes
 ‘Yes.’

Father: Why can’t Den afford the repairs?

Child: Because it may cost him thousands.....

Father: Ta haizai shangnaojien ta zhaoren lai xiouli keneng yaohao
 He really worried he find someone come fix might cost
 jiqian kuai...Is there anything wrong with the computer?
 Thousands dollars
 ‘He is worried that it might cost him thousands of dollars to fix it...Is there
 anything wrong with the computer?’ (FRG07)

Although we find examples such as these from conversation, these two examples were in fact the only examples among all the recordings from the six pairs of participants. The other interactions were on error correction, repetition and translating to comprehend the texts, for example:

(88) Pronunciation correction

(Book title: Little Hoot can’t sleep)

Child: A wild wind was howling around the

Mother: Howling.....youmeiyou...nage...how
 There be that

...shibushinage h-o-w- nage how...howlin

There be that

'howling...isn't there...that...how...isn't it the h-o-w that how...howling'

Child: Howling...

Mother: Meiyou...meiyou juen shea... ni zemeyou juenshe?

Neg neg curlup tongue you why curl up

'no...no curling up the tongue...why do you curl up your tongue?'

Child: Howling...howling...howling.(keep repeating)

Mother: Howling around the forest. (FRG05)

(89) Repetition

(Book title: Funnybones)

Child: Come in ghost, come in mosters...

Mother: Monsters....

Child: Monsters.... Come in and say hello.....ta shuo... jienlai guei,
He said come in ghost

Jienlai guaiwu... jienlai say hello
come in monster come in

'Monsters...come in and say hello...he said...come in ghost, come in
monster...come in say hello.'

Mother: There is nothing to be afraid of ... zheli mei nian ... meiyou
Here neg read neg

sheme haohaipade .. But only the fireflies came in.
what afraid

'There is nothing to be afraid of.....it's not read here.....nothing to be afraid
of.....but only the fireflies came in.'

Child: But only the flier.....

Mother: Fireflies

Child: Oh....but only the fireflies came in

Mother: They settled around the nest, making a warm soft glob.

Child: They stay..

Mother: Settled

Child: Settled around the nest...marking

Mother: Meiyou marking.....making.

Neg

'There is no marking...making.'

Child: Making a wa

Mother: Warm..
 Child: Warm soft glob.
 Mother: Chuenglai yici...They settled around the nest.
 Repeat again
 'Do it again...They settled around the nest.'
 Child: They settled around the nest. (FRG05)

(90) Comprehension checking

(Book title: Where the wild things are)

Mother: OK, Mimi, ni du zhepian wenzhang ge mama tieng haobuhao?
 You read this story for mum listen question
 'OK, Mimi, can you read this to mommy?'

Child: Hao...where the wild things are...yisi jiushi
 Yes meaning is
 Yes...where the wild things are...meaning'

Mother: Where the wild things are..

Child: Where the wild things are...yisi jiushi ...naliyou yiesheng
 Meaning is where wild
 duengwu ne?
 animal question
 'Where the wild things are means that...where are the wild animals?'
 (FRG11)

(91) Translation

(Book title: unknown, not from the book collection)

Mother: I'm from Taipei. What shizhi 'sheme', jiushi ni shi cueng
 Is what is you is from
 sheme chengshi laide. Ranzhou ta jiushi I'm from Taipei,
 what city come then it means
 wo shi cueng nali laide.
 I am from there come
 'I'm from Taipei. What is 'what'. It means which city are you from, so the
 answer is I'm from Taipei..'

Child: o....na...nazhege city shi sheme yisi?
 That then is what meaning
 'oh...that...then this city means what?'

Mother: Shi cueng taibei laide...City shizhi chengshi.
 Is from Taipei come means city

'From Taipei...city means 'city'.

Child: O...Chengshi.

city

'Oh...city.' (FRG08)

(92) Pronunciation correction

(Book title: Room on the broom)

Child: Yes, cring the witch

Father: Cry

Child: Cry the witch so the bread

Father: Bird

Child: Bird....

Father: Flatter

Child: Flatter on...the witch tapped it the blue stick and whoof they were go

Father: stick Gone

Child: gone

Father: Over the lake and the river they flow... the bird...shaked...withgoody
and stormy wind blow...they shock through the sky to the back of
beyond...the witch ...touched her though...but they go xxxx [can't hear
clearly because the child coughed] they want

Child: Down cried the witch...they sank to the goned

Father: Ground

Child: Ground they sen searched for the waid but no way come

Father: Searched could

Child: Could be found

Father: Be found (FR02)

(93) Pronunciation

(Book title: The three piglets)

Child: And he blow down.

Mother: Dengxia, bushi blue, meiyou /u/, blue shi lanse.

Wait neg no is blue

'Wait, not blue, no /u/, blue is blue as in colour.'

Child: An he blow down. (FRG01)

(94) Translation and comprehension checking

(Book title: Little Hoot can't sleep)

Child: Howling around the forest.

Mother: Hao... sheme yisi?
 Alright what meaning
 'Alright, what does it mean?'

Child: Ta shuo...shi yige hen an hen ande yige baofengyude
 It says is a very dark very dark a stormy
 wanshang.
 night
 'It says...it is a very dark stormy night.'

Mother: En.....A wild.....wild shi sheme?
 Is what
 'Yes.....a wild.....what does 'wild' mean?'

Child: Wild.....bu zhidao.
 Neg know
 'Wild.....I don't know.'

Mother: Kuangyede ma?
 Wild question mark
 'wild?'

Child: Oo.....yige kuangyede
 A wild
 'ok...a wild '

Mother: Jioushi hen kuang feng bao yude
 Is very strong wind heavy rain
 'a whether with very strong wind and heavy rain'

Child: Jioushi yige kuangyede feng ma.
 Is a strong wind question
 'Just strong wind'

Mother: Jioushi hen kuang fengde zai senlinli....around the forest...
 Is very strong wind in forest
 'Just strong winds in the forest...around the forest'

Child: Zai senli.
 In forest
 'In the forest.'

Mother: En...around the forest...zai senlinli....dueibuduei. zailai...chasing
 In forest right or not then
 shadows across the sky and wrestling the branches on the tree.
 'Yes...around the forest...in the forest...right...next...chasing shadows
 across the sky and wrestling the branches on the tree.' (FRG05)

In addition to interaction style, the techniques parents used may also show who takes more responsibility during the joint-reading. J. Wang (2006) listed the techniques parents had used in her study, including reading aloud, finger pointing, asking questions, involving pictures, storytelling and discussing the content. In reading aloud, the parents in her study used three forms of vocalized reading: (1) the parent read aloud first to demonstrate the language and then the child repeated; (2) the parent read aloud together with child; (3) the child read aloud and the parents followed the lines silently. In my data, all of the parents used only the second type. However, the parents whose voices were not present on the tape may have been monitoring their children in silence, as in (3). Wang also pointed out that the parents in her study rarely discussed contents with the children, not even in Chinese which is similar to my results. She believed that this was because of the children's ages (age 6-11)⁸⁹ as well as the content of the books. Sometimes the book was easy to read but had no plot. However, it might also depend on the parents' individual goals for reading English books with their children. Most of her participants focused on reading the language aloud more than to gain the meaning or to appreciate the language as a whole. Therefore, few discussions were observed.

Apart from J. Wang's conclusion that the techniques parents applied during the reading process were limited, she specifically stated that the parents' reading instruction mostly emphasized language learning. They usually stressed pronunciation and the meaning of the words. With regards to the comprehension of the text, they focused more on translating the words than discussing the meaning and implications of the content. Their reading process was thus more bottom-up. Along with this kind of reading method come interruptions in reading for pronunciation correction and comprehension and checking through translation. Children are likely not to enjoy reading when they are constantly corrected and asked questions. Her results are in exact accordance with the results of the current study. Conversely, in Wood (2002), children who engaged in a variety of pre-school parent-child activities showed the best achievement in reading one year later on measures of reading and spelling. Neither of which were measured in the present study, however. If variety of activities means more than bottom-up (e.g. pronunciation correction, sounding out words etc. in this study), this is what was missing in the present project (see also Hargrave & Sénéchal, 2000).

⁸⁹ In her study, parents reflected that it was difficult to make the children sit down to read English books for a while, especially the younger ones.

Huebner and Meltzoff (2005) state that reading aloud with children is particularly effective when the shared reading is highly interactive. The advantages of an interactive or 'dialogic' style of reading on young children's oral language skills were demonstrated first by Whitehurst and his colleagues in a study of a shared reading programme called 'Dialogic' or 'Hear-and-Say' reading (Whitehurst, Falco, Lonigan, Fischel, DeBaryshe & Valdez-Menchaca, 1988). Huebner (2000) reported that parents' baseline reading style included few dialogic reading behaviors, similar to the current study. Without interaction, development may be slow and limited.

From the above results, the parents in the present seemed to face some trouble in reading with their children. We see parents used limited techniques and low level/low-demand strategies in reading and did so without seeking advice from the researcher or the guidebook, although they were at least willing to read with their children. This leads me to conclude that parents still need advice on this and it signals that the guidebook did not work well because the activities in the guidebook were not adopted. In my opinion, the parents still did not know how to read with their children at the end of this project and so on an ER programme like this they need advice urgently or children will lose interest. From Hypothesis 2a, we indeed see that children were not strongly motivated to read because the total number of their reading sessions was under the requirements for this study. One idea is that the school or the government could start working on educating the parents on guidance and time arrangements, through training sessions, workshops or meetings for example. If schools are involved in providing parental guidance, the parents may take it more seriously. Here Collins and Matthey (2001) show that individual pair training works better than group training because of the immediate feedback and rewards to motivate reading. Alternatively, parents could gain knowledge on this from coaching videotapes (like Arnold (2007) in Hong Kong) and instructional books, like the guidebook of this study, as suggested by Zeng (2007). Although a lot of empirical studies showed that family reading helps children's language development (Adams, 1990; Bus & Van Ijzendoorn, 1988; Haney & Hill, 2004; Kamber & Tan, 2003; Leseman & de Jong, 1998; Rasinski, 1995; Rasinski & Stevenson, 2005; van Kleeck *et al.*, 1997; Wang, 2001a)(section 2.5.4), the current study did not yield many significant results regarding learners' language development. To initiate acquisition, the right kind of interaction (Huebner, 2000; Huebner & Meltzoff, 2005) and a variety of activities (Wood, 2002) are required.

5.3.3 Hypothesis 3c: Children enjoy reading with their parents.

Three questions in the behaviour section of the questionnaire indicated the result: Q7 (Parents’ company can increase their children’s reading interest), Q8 (You prefer reading alone), and Q9 (You think parents should let their children read on their own without intervening after their children can read independently). As said earlier in hypothesis 1b, the only significant change observed was that the independent readers reported that they preferred to read alone after the programme (Q8: $p=.046$).

Additionally, the first question of the implementation problems of post-test asked if this project had brought a lot of pressure on the participants. Three of the 11 family reading children thought so (Table 5.29), which was a rather high percentage (27.3%). I suspect this was caused by the implementation methods during the family reading session. If parents asked children to sound out the texts on their own or corrected errors often, this would result in high pressure on the child reader. Other sources of information were consulted to investigate this further.

Table 5.29 Post-treatment questionnaire (family group) - Q1: This kind of reading brought you a lot of pressure.

(Family reading group, N=11)	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly disagree	2	18.2	18.2
disagree	2	18.2	36.4
no comment	4	36.4	72.7
strongly agree	3	27.3	100.0
Total	11	100.0	

After checking the interview transcripts and reading session transcripts, I was able to see why there was stress. In one case, the parent and the child’s low level of English seemed to cause a high level of pressure while reading for they had to stop constantly to check vocabulary. They had also chosen books which were the wrong level. The second case was also caused by difficult books, which I will investigate in the next hypothesis, in addition to the parents’ constant correction of pronunciation. The audio recording of the latter session showed the child was sounding out the texts, but they were far too difficult for his level to comprehend, and he was reading alone without parents’ feedback or help. There was hardly any discussion of the contexts or feelings in these three cases, which probably increased the high stress to the children.

Interview records showed that all of the family reading children said they enjoyed reading with parents. The biggest advantages of family reading were that there was no need to use the dictionary and they were more fun. Interestingly, even the independent

group children understood these advantages and agreed. The following shows their opinions in translation (see Appendix 37 for originals).

‘It’s easier to read with parents’ company, I can ask them for the words and contents I don’t understand.’ (FRG10)

‘Children can feel the love of their parents.’ (RAG17)

‘Parents can learn too.’ (RAG05)

‘Parents can explain it to me.’ (RAG18)

Although there were advantages, children also said that they could be told off by the parents if they did not do well.

‘I like my parents’ company. It is more fun, less boring. The problem is sometimes if the books are easy and I can’t read the word, Dad and Mom will ask why can’t I read such easy words.’ (FRG06)

‘If I made a mistake, my parents would flick me on my ear. I don’t envy other people who have their parents’ company.’ (RAG10)⁹⁰

‘If I can’t read, I will be told off.’ (RAG11)

Still, some children strongly expressed their wish to read alone, for example,

‘I still prefer reading alone, I am not jealous of other parents’ company because my dad works late and my mom does not care too much about my study.’ (RAG06)

The above results showed that learners had different opinions on parents’ company. As we have seen in hypothesis 1b, there was no difference between the family reading group and the reading alone group in the pre-treatment questionnaire. However, at the end of the programme, independent readers strongly preferred reading on their own. The result of this hypothesis is, however, somehow inconclusive.

⁹⁰ In fact, in 1970s and 80s, physical punishment in Taiwanese educational circumstances was common. Teachers and parents often used it to make students study harder. This has greatly improved since the 90s and now physical punished is not allowed at school. However, we still see cases of physical punishment inside and outside of schools from time to time.

5.3.4 Hypothesis 3d: Participants will be able to find books at their level and interest.

As we have seen, many learners were reading books which were too difficult for them. Book levels may turn out to be a more important factor than has been realised on ER programmes. Therefore, this section is devoted to the relationships among the learners, book type and level, and the effect on progress.

5.3.4.1 Hypothesis 3d-1: Children who enjoy reading will be able to choose books which suit them.

In order to test this hypothesis, it is necessary to define children's proficiency level and the book level first. From the above hypothesis, learners' levels could be defined from their performance on vocabulary, sentence restructuring tasks, or OG stages. However, the levels of the books have not yet been defined, apart from by reference to the publisher's definition of levels. As said earlier, publishers used their own definition of levels and different series often use different vocabulary size and syntactic difficulty scales. Therefore, I would like to look at this in more depth, starting by examining book levels in terms of vocabulary and syntactic difficulty.

First, I compared the basic word list compiled by the Primary English teaching committee of KeeLung City (English Teaching Resource Website of KeeLung City, 2008) (see 4.8.3.6) with the book vocabulary to see if these basic words appeared in the books.⁹¹ Only if they did would the learners be able to handle the vocabulary. A sample of 21 books for which the texts were available was used for analysis. From Table 5.30, we see that the ratio of these words in the books was very low, ranging from 5% to 21%. In other words, the books were too difficult for the learners because there were only a few words they could recognise in the books. The theory of $i - 1$ or the 95% of known words was clearly not the case here. The vocabulary in the books was for beyond $i + 1$, although some of these books were classified as level 1 in their publisher's definitions. This, however, might have had a big impact on the project because the learners may have lost interest out of frustration or not being able to find suitable books, etc.

Regarding grammar in these books, most of the books were between OG stage 3 and 4 (Table 5.30). Please see Appendix 32 for OG levels of all the books. From section

⁹¹ Although I have mentioned in 2.4.2.2 the problem of using frequency lists, I would argue that the results would probably be similar even if a different frequency wordlist is used for analysis since the ratio of the words in the booklist is so low.

5.2.4.2, the analysis of learners' stages before the project showed that the learners were mostly at earlier stages. The book collection should provide comprehensible input and learners should be able to find books which were at or slightly above their levels. For instance, a level two learner should read at level three ($i + 1$) in order to progress.

Table 5.30 Book type, number of sight words and book OG level

Book title	Type	No. of 'basic' words	Book word count	basic word ratio	Book OG level
Not Now, Bernard	Real book	27	154	18%	3
We're going on a bear hunt	Real book	25	408	6%	3
One Monday morning	Real book	21	280	8%	3
No Nap	Real book	59	380	16%	4
I just forgot	Real book	45	310	15%	4
Marvin wants more	Real book	34	286	12%	4
			Mean	12.5%	
Bear hugs	Reader	18	85	21%	2
Pass the present	Reader	11	110	10%	3
Tony the flying turtle	Reader	56	332	17%	3
Little Hoot can't sleep	Reader	21	132	16%	3
Pocahontas	Reader	38	330	12%	3
Pig parade	Reader	30	164	18%	3
Monkey-monkey's trick	Reader	56	941	6%	4
The first thanksgiving	Reader	82	1162	7%	4
A message in a bottle	Reader	40	343	12%	4
People who help us	Reader	43	319	13%	4
The big baby	Reader	57	509	11%	4
Firefly moon	Reader	40	408	10%	4
Mrs. Brice's Mice	Reader	56	382	15%	4
The teeny tiny woman	Reader	34	311	11%	4
Spy in the night	Reader	34	266	13%	5
			Mean	12.8%	

Now, let us look at what books children actually read during the project. Children's choices of books seemed random. Table 5.31 (see also Appendix 42) lists the levels of the books chosen by each learner based on Organic Grammar stages. The numbers of tokens listed here do not match the children's total number of reading sessions because some books that they had read were not from my book collection and some of the records were not clearly recorded. The tokens follow the chronological order of the learners' records. The reason for random selection could be that the children kept looking for books at the right level. In addition, Day and Bamford (1998:92) suggest that students reading extensively do not always follow a straightforward, upward path.

It is natural, and switching back and forth between levels should not be discouraged. Some students will be eager to read on a topic and that book might present a slight challenge. Others will wish to read books recommended by other children no matter how easy or difficult they are. Students will read material at different levels at different times – some material that is within their comfort zone, and some that is slightly beyond it. There may also be students who will try to read above their comfort level because they think they ought to be reading more difficult materials, or because they think it is the best way to make progress. Nonetheless, the point of reading for enjoyment was made clear at the beginning of the present project. Therefore, this type of reader should be scarce. Since the children’s selection of books had no pattern, this hypothesis could not be supported (Appendix 42).

Finally, if we look at the learners for whom we have both OG stages on all three tests and book records, we see that seven (FRG01, FRG 02, FRG05, FRG06, RAG01, RAG02, RAG4) out of thirteen learners chose books at least two stages above their morpho-syntactic level. Although the other six learners chose the books slightly beyond their current level ($i + 1$), it could have been pure chance.

Table 5.31 Learners’ OG level and the levels of their book choices

Learner	Pre-test stage	Book levels (syntax-OG)	Mode
FRG01	0	5,3,4,	-
FRG02	2	3,4,4,4	4
FRG03	3	3,4,4,4,4	4
FRG04	2	3,3,4,3,4,	3
FRG05	2	4,4,3,4,4,3,5,3,5,4,4,4,5,3,4,4,3,4,2	4
FRG06	2	4,2,3,4,4,4,3,4,4,4	4
FRG07	3-4	4,4,3,3,4,3,5,3,4,4,3,4,4,3,3,3,	3
RAG01	1	3,3,4,4	3,4
RAG02	2	3,4,5,5,	5
RAG03	4	4,5,3,3,5,	3,5
RAG04	2-3	4,4,4,4,4,3,3,4,4,4,3,3,4,3	4
RAG05	4	3,4,4,3,4,3,3,4,3,3,3,,3,4,3,5,0,4,4,5,4,4	3,4
RAG06	3-4	3,4,4,5,3,4,4,4,4,5,3,4,4,4,4,4,3,4,4,3,4,4,3,5,4,4,4,4,4,3,	4

From the above results, we see a few problems for the extensive reading approach. First, publishers’ lowest level of graded readers and real books for young learners

might still be too difficult for primary EFL learners in Taiwan who have only learned English for two years. It is important to know both the vocabulary and syntactic level of the reading texts before asking learners to read. Second, it is difficult for learners to choose their reading materials for themselves. However, allowing children to select books is a feature of ER. Yet when children are left their own devices to choose books, they might end up choosing the wrong levels and become demotivated. Teachers should be doing this job. When teachers are involved, they may do this intuitively. Third, in ER, the focus is usually on vocabulary size, but not on syntax. However, syntactic difficulty will have an influence on restructuring learners' linguistic competence, according to Krashen's comprehensible input hypothesis. Only when learners are exposed to comprehensible input ($i + 1$) will they improve. The $i - 1$ idea (Day & Bamford, 1998) concerns vocabulary to improve reading fluency, but not morpho-syntactic competence. If learners are fed the wrong level of input, their improvement could be limited. The books in the current study contained a very low percentage of the words which the participants learned at school. That means the books were too difficult in terms of vocabulary, which could result in learners not being able to find books which were $i + 1$. The books were mostly $i + 3$ or more. In a situation like this, it is likely that the learners would continue to choose books randomly or choose them based on external factors such as illustrations and length.

5.3.4.2 Hypothesis 3d-2: Children who are good at selecting the right books will read more.

Following the above hypothesis, we want to know whether children who had chosen the right books ($i+1$, books which were one stage above the learner's current stage) read more. Table 5.32 summarises the comparison. Six learners who had selected the right books (in terms of syntax) did not read significantly more. Half of the six children who read the most had chosen the right books. Since the percentage is only 50%, the hypothesis is inconclusive. Also, half the children from the six who read the most were from the family reading group. Whether parental involvement was able to promote reading is inconclusive in this study.

Table 5.32 Book selection and total number of sessions

Learner	Pre-test stage	Book Level (OG criteria)	Mode	Choosing i+1 books	Total no. of sessions
RAG06	3-4	3,4,4,5,3,4,4,4,4,5,3,4,4,4,4,4,3,4,4,3,4,4,3,5,4,4,4,4,4,3,	4	Yes	41
FRG07	3-4	4,4,3,3,4,3,5,3,4,4,3,4,4,3,3,3,	3	Yes	24
RAG05	4	3,4,4,3,4,3,3,4,3,3,3,,3,4,3,5,0,4,4,5,4,4	3,4	Yes	22
FRG01	0	5,3,4,	-	No	20
FRG05	2	4,4,3,4,4,3,5,3,5,4,4,4,5,3,4,4,3,4,2	4	No	19
RAG04	2-3	4,4,4,4,4,3,3,4,4,4,3,3,4,3	4	No	14
FRG04	2	3,3,4,3,4,	3	Yes	11
FRG06	2	4,2,3,4,4,4,3,4,4,4	4	No	10
RAG03	4	4,5,3,3,5,	3,5	Yes	9
FRG03	3	3,4,4,4,4	4	Yes	5
RAG02	2	3,4,5,5,	5	No	4
RAG01	1	3,3,4,4	3,4	No	4
FRG02	2	3,4,4,4	4	No	4

5.3.4.3 Hypothesis 3d-3: Children who are good at selecting the right books will make more progress in vocabulary and morpho-syntax.

This hypothesis examines whether Krashen’s comprehensible input hypothesis is supported by the project. In other words, if children selected books at the right level, they should make progress. Table 5.33 shows the test results of the six learners who had chosen the right books. On morpho-syntax, only three of the six advanced to the next OG stages at the end of the project. Four of these six improved in either the post-test or the delayed post-test on vocabulary, while five of them improved in the sentence restructuring task. FRG 07 had already reached 100% correct percentage in the pre-test and therefore could not show anymore improvement in the task. RAG05 maintained the same level in the three vocabulary tests, and so did FRG04 in sentence restructuring. That is, these learners either improved or maintained their level on vocabulary and sentence restructuring. On the other hand, for those who did not select the right books, all improved on their OG stages after the project, with only one exception (FRG01). All the seven learners improved on vocabulary and five of them showed improvement on sentence restructuring task. RAG04 could not improve on sentence restructuring task because the pre-test had been 100% correct. In short, nearly all of the learners in these two subgroups regarding i+1 books showed improvement on vocabulary and sentence restructuring, except FRG01. However, the

learners in ‘*i+1* book’ group did not do as well as the other group on morpho-syntactic development. The hypothesis was not really supported. A closer observation seems to show that the ‘*i+1*’ group generally had higher levels than the other group. This might mean that learners at lower level had more problems finding the right books, but as long as they kept reading, they still made progress. This might also suggest that learners at lower level benefited more morpho-syntactically than the more advanced learners from the extensive reading approach. However, I need to point out that when I set up the book collection, I expected that there would be more advanced beginners. In the end, there were more books at around low intermediate to intermediate levels, which were at around OG level three and above. This means those learners who were at levels three and above had a larger choice of the books. We will need a well-designed future study to investigate the issue.

Table 5.33 Table of selection of right books and improvement

Learner	Choos- ing <i>i+1</i> books	OG				Vocabulary				Sentence Restructuring			
		Pre- test (%)	Post- test (%)	Delayed post-test (%)	Improve- ment	Pre- test (%)	Post- test (%)	Delayed post-test (%)	Improve- ment	Pre- test (%)	Post- test (%)	Delayed post-test (%)	Improve- ment
RAG06	Yes	3-4	4	4	Yes	95	98	95	Yes	90	100	100	Yes
FRG04	Yes	2	3	3	Yes	68	75	78	Yes	83	81	83	No
FRG07	Yes	3-4	4	4	Yes	100	95	100	No	80	100	100	Yes
FRG03	Yes	3	3-4	3-4	No	95	100	100	Yes	78	100	100	Yes
RAG03	Yes	4	4	3-4	No	65	70	68	Yes	83	76	92	Yes
RAG05	Yes	4	4	4	No	98	98	98	No	90	89	100	Yes
FRG02	No	2	3	3	Yes	43	58	65	Yes	45	65	53	Yes
FRG05	No	2	2-3	2-3	Yes	93	98	98	Yes	75	81	83	Yes
FRG06	No	2	2	2-3	Yes	60	85	65	Yes	45	62	56	Yes
RAG01	No	1	1	1-2	Yes	15	8	18	Yes	18	8	19	Yes
RAG02	No	2	2	2-3	Yes	80	98	93	Yes	60	76	69	Yes
RAG04	No	2-3	3-4	3-4	Yes	78	83	98	Yes	100	89	100	No
FRG01	No	0	0	0	No	20	30	38	Yes	38	11	25	No

So far, we have looked at the changes of single variables and relationships between variables. However, variables may interact with or have more influence on more than one variable and thus the relationships between variables may not be just one to one. When this is the case, a variable may have more influence on a second variable than another one. I would argue that language learning is no exception. Learners are usually influenced by many variables at the same time and it is important for us to

know which variables have the most impact on learning, so that we can have a better place to start. Therefore, in the following section, I would like to investigate the relationships among the variables in the present study.

Linear regression analysis utilizes the presence of an association between two variables to predict the values of one variable (the dependent or criterion variable) from those of another (the independent variable, or regressor). In simple regression, there is just one regressor or dependent variable; in complex regression there are two or more dependent variables (Kinnear & Gray, 2008:428). Multiple regression analysis was used to investigate the influence of several independent variables on the vocabulary and sentence restructuring tasks (dependent variables). The independent variables included attitude of pre-/post-treatment questionnaire, total number of sessions, cram school hours per week, the English storybooks at home before the study started (the data of these two questions were from the pre-treatment questionnaire) and the learners' book selection. Only the learners who had complete sets of data of book selection and proficiency OG level were included (N=13). Unfortunately, I have not yet managed to learn the way to include OG level (ordinal variable) as dependent variable in this analysis and thus OG stages are excluded in the regression test.

Two general approaches to multiple regression were used (Kinnear & Gray, 2008; Wu & Tu, 2005). In simultaneous multiple regression, all of the relevant independent variables were entered into the equation directly, so that the tests for each regression coefficient effectively put it 'at the end of the queue' and tested R square change in the presence of all the other variables. In stepwise multiple regression, the independent variables were added to the equation one at a time, the order of entry being determined by preset statistical criteria, 0.05 in this case.

The model summary of simultaneous multiple regression analysis is listed below. R square is the proportion of variation in the dependent variable explained by the regression model. Small R square values indicate that the model does not fit the data well. Adjusted R square attempts to correct R square to more closely reflect the goodness of fit of the model in the population. In this case, 56.8% of variation in the vocabulary and 84.1% in sentence restructuring can be explained by the regression model. However, the results of an analysis of variance showed that the independent variables did not explain the variation in the dependent variables (Vocabulary: $F = 2.755$, $p = 0.219 > 0.05$; Sentence restructuring: $F = 8.049$, $p = 0.057 > 0.05$). I would argue that this insignificance may be due to the small sample size and the number

independent variables. It is more difficult to see if the sample has a normal distribution. Models with too many variables may also influence the effect.

Table 5.34 Model Summary – Simultaneous multiple regression

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
Vocabulary				
1	0.944	0.892	0.568	0.19062
Sentence Restructuring				
1	0.980	0.960	0.841	0.12125

a. Predictors: (Constant), bad selectors – good selectors (i+1 books), 11-20 books – above 31books, none – above 31 books, attitude (post-treatment questionnaire), 21-30 books - above 31books, below 10 books – above 31 books, total number of sessions of the experimental group children, cram school hours per week, attitude (pre-treatment questionnaire)

Nonetheless, in stepwise multiple regression, two independent variables entered the model: attitude in the pre-treatment questionnaire and below 10 books – above 31 books. 55.5% of variation in the vocabulary and 66.5% in sentence restructuring can be explained by the regression model. This means that these two variables had quite a strong influence on the two dependent variables.

Table 5.35 Model Summary – Stepwise multiple regression

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
Vocabulary									
1	0.649	0.422	0.369	0.23040	0.422	8.024	1	11	0.016
2	0.793	0.629	0.555	0.19359	0.207	5.581	1	10	0.040
Sentence Restructuring									
1	0.658	0.433	0.381	0.23919	0.433	8.384	1	11	0.015
2	0.849	0.721	0.665	0.17602	0.288	10.311	1	10	0.009

- a. Predictors: (Constant), attitude (pre-treatment questionnaire)
b. Predictors: (Constant), attitude (pre-treatment questionnaire), below 10 books – above 31 books

The results of an analysis of variance (Table 5.35) showed that the independent variables explained the variation in the dependent variables well (significant level <0.05).

From the coefficient Table 5.36, we can find the multiple regression equation of the models. In addition, the standardised coefficients (Betas)⁹² suggested that regarding vocabulary, learners who were higher in pre-treatment attitude scored higher in the

⁹² The standardised coefficients (Beta) value: Often the independent variables are measures in different units. The standardised coefficients or betas are an attempt to make the regression coefficients more comparable (all the variables are expressed in z scores) (Kinnear & Gray, 2008).

vocabulary and sentence restructuring. Also, learners who had less than 10 books at home scored significantly lower in the vocabulary and sentence restructuring tasks than those who had more than 31 books.

Table 5.36 ANOVA - Stepwise multiple regression

Vocabulary						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	0.426	1	0.426	8.024	0.016
	Residual	0.584	11	0.053		
	Total	1.010	12			
2	Regression	0.635	2	0.318	8.474	0.007
	Residual	0.375	10	0.037		
	Total	1.010	12			
Sentence restructuring						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	0.480	1	0.480	8.384	0.015
	Residual	0.629	11	0.057		
	Total	1.109	12			
2	Regression	0.799	2	0.400	12.896	0.002
	Residual	0.310	10	0.031		
	Total	1.109	12			

- a. Predictors: (Constant), attitude (pre-treatment questionnaire)
b. Predictors: (Constant), attitude (pre-treatment questionnaire), below 10 books – above 31 books

Table 5.37 Coefficients - Stepwise multiple regression

Model	R	R ²	R ² Change	F Change	F	B	Beta
Vocabulary							
(Constant)						-0.403	
attitude (pre-treatment questionnaire)	0.649	0.422	0.422	8.024	8.024	0.032	0.649
below 10 books – above 31 books	0.793	0.629	0.207	5.581	8.474	-0.352	-0.455
Sentence restructuring							
(Constant)						-0.509	
attitude (pre-treatment questionnaire)	0.658	0.433	0.433	8.384	8.384	0.034	0.658
below 10 books – above 31 books	0.849	0.721	0.288	10.311	12.896	-0.435	-0.537

So far, we have seen that multiple regression analysis can be used to elicit crucial variables in complex situations, like language learning. In this study, only two

variables had a greater impact, using very limited available data which was not originally designed for this usage. There should be a causal model of focal variables to establish their relative importance. This study is considered at the early stages of such research in the area and I have no such model to follow. Therefore, future research could work on the model for further investigation.

5.3.4.4 Hypothesis 3d-4: Real books will be more popular than graded readers.

The data for this hypothesis was collected from the reading records (Appendix 30). In the book collection, 37 were real books and 42 were graded readers. There was no significant difference between the number of these two types of books ($p=.157$). The total number of borrowing for real books was 180 tokens and the number for graded readers was 224. Graded readers seemed to be more popular than real books and the difference was statistically significant ($p=0.000$, see Appendix 38). Learners obviously prefer graded readers. Learners' choice of book could depend on a variety of reasons, e.g. illustration, layout, font, book language level (vocabulary and syntax) and learner's language level, book size and familiarity of the story. After counting the basic words in each book (Table 5.30), there does not seem to be a difference in the number of basic words between the real books and the graded readers. Therefore, vocabulary level did not seem to be the key factor in this study. Neither did the book levels in terms of OG criteria (Table 5.30) because the book levels seemed similar, too. It would require qualitative or a massive amount of quantitative data to thoroughly investigate the learners' choice of books. Another interesting topic to research would be to look at whether one of these two types of books would help improve learners' proficiency more than the other.

One last thing to mention in this section is during the study period, I had around 30 minutes to introduce a new book that I bought after the study started. However, this did not take place every week because of other school activities. At the time, I did not keep a log of what book I brought in because I did not think of it as a variable at that time. As a result, I am not able to analyse the uptake of the books I presented to the experimental groups.

The results of Hypothesis 3 did not seem to support the sub-hypotheses. Firstly, the reading frequency was far lower than the required amount. Secondly, parents did not use the guidebook suggestions or read interactively with their children. Thirdly, although some children liked reading with parents, some still preferred reading alone. Lastly, the participants were not able to find the 'appropriate' books for themselves.

5.4 Major findings

The aim of the present study was to investigate the influence of extra-curricular input through home reading on Taiwanese primary learners' English. The basic assumption underlying the investigation was that the more input learners receive, the better their proficiency will be. Through an after-school extensive reading programme, learners were prompted to obtain extra English input through storybooks. The central concern of this study was to find out to what extent and in what ways the project influenced learning, and the extent and the nature of the help that parents provided in one of the two experimental groups. Let us now review the major findings.

Hypothesis 1. Home English extensive reading has a positive influence on the learners' attitude and changes behaviour:

- a. The project had a positive effect on reading participants' attitude towards English reading.
- b. The project did not change the participants' reading habit/behaviour very much.
- c. No significant correlation was observed between attitude and the amount of reading.

Hypothesis 2. Extra-curricular reading has a positive influence on primary learners' English proficiency:

- a. The project did not improve the participants' vocabulary. However, the family reading group showed more individual improvement than the other two groups.
- b. The project did not improve the participants' sentence restructuring ability. However, more children in the reading alone group improved in the delayed post-test (section 5.2.3) and this group of learners also showed more individual improvement than the other two groups.
- c. The readers outperformed the non-readers, especially in morpho-syntax. There was a significant correlation between learners' attitude and their proficiency.

Hypothesis 3: Parents will help provide English extra-curricular input at home:

- a. It was difficult for the participants to read 10-15 minutes twice a week.
- b. Parents only used fixed methods to read with their children.
- c. Some children enjoyed reading with their parents, some did not.
- d. The children in the experimental groups generally had problems selecting the right books. Most learners chose books randomly and ended up reading books which were too difficult. Those who could choose the right books did not read

more than the others. Children who were good at selecting the right books did not outperform the children who were not. Children preferred graded readers in this study; although the reason was not investigated.

- e. Multiple regression analysis can be used to investigate the relationships and effect sizes among variables. Two variables, pre-treatment attitude and book number at home (less than 10 books vs. more than 31 books), had more effect than the other independent variables (post-treatment attitude, total number of reading sessions, cram school hours, book selection, no books – above 31 books, 11-20 books – above 31 books, and 21-30 books - above 31 books) on the performance of vocabulary and sentence restructuring tasks.

The real issue to address is how to get children to read. Despite the fact that Taiwanese parents are involved in their children's education, it turned out that they did not work positively with their children, contrary to what I had expected from the baseline survey /needs analysis. Motivation must come from somewhere else.

In the concluding chapter, I will continue to discuss the three original research questions based on the data in this chapter.

This chapter provides a summary, discussion and the conclusions of the research study, followed by its implications, limitations, and suggestions for future study. The summary is drawn from the findings and analyses in chapter five, focusing on the implementation of a home extensive reading project to increase learners' extra-curricular input and its effect on learners' attitudes and behaviour change, the improvement of learners' English proficiency and the ways learners dealt with the reading. In the discussion, we will focus on the three original research questions. The implications of the project are the ways it can help improve extra-curricular input through home reading in similar situations, followed by the study limitations and suggestions for future research.

6.1 Discussion

The three research questions are discussed in this section:

1. Can 'home extensive reading' succeed in supplementing primary EFL instruction by providing more extra-curricular input?
2. Does home reading positively influence learners' English proficiency?
3. How do the children (and parents) go about the task of reading?

6.1.1 Can 'home extensive reading' succeed in supplementing primary EFL instruction by providing more extra-curricular input?

The data seemed to suggest a positive evaluation of the programme. The quantitative data showed positive influence on reading participants' attitude, as in many other studies (e.g. Elley, 1991; Hafiz & Tudor, 1989; Tudor & Hafiz, 1989). The qualitative data showed the participants' support of the programme (section 5.1.1). Few significant changes were observed in the experimental groups' reading behaviour, e.g. dictionary usage or reading speed etc. (section 5.1.2). Possible reasons for lack of behaviour changes were the short study period and limited understanding of the approach. The study design may have also contributed. The programme lasted only three and half months, and some of the learners might not have got used to the approach or to reading in English. According to Krashen (2004b), the effect of reading projects is best shown after a year. The extensive reading approach in L2 is relatively new in Taiwan and thus learners and their parents have limited knowledge of the approach, which could lead to unhelpful methods (e.g. more bottom-up reading like pronunciation correction or comprehension checking through translation). It is

likely that this contributed to the low level of expectation regarding the rate of improvement of the participants. The low expectations of the participants could have influenced the study's achievement (Collins & Matthey, 2001). Moreover, this study used self-reported-behaviour via questionnaires and a gap between the participants' real and reported practices may exist.

In theory, a positive learners' reading attitude should push them to read more and therefore, a positive correlation was hypothesised. However, a correlation was not observed in the current study. That is, learners with better attitude did not necessarily read more (section 5.2.4.6). There must therefore be other factors which affect learners' amount of reading, e.g. time available for extra-curricular reading, book selection, understanding of extensive reading, learners' reading methods and so on. However, it is difficult to study these factors individually in practice. In order to study the influence of the possible factors, a study using factor analysis and regression is needed to find out which is the most important factor, which will have a very important pedagogical value for methods of reading promotion.

Despite all the suggested benefits and positive outcomes reported in the literature, extensive reading is still not very common in EFL contexts. Day and Bamford (1998:46-47) list possible reasons, including cost, the work required to set up a programme, the difficulty of finding time for it in the already-crowded curriculum, the different role of the teacher, the light nature of the reading material, the dominance of the reading skills approach, the belief that reading should be delayed until students can speak and understand the L2, and confusion between extensive reading and class readers. If we put these reasons in the context of this study in Taiwan, the present study relates directly to two of them: finding time for extensive reading and the nature of the material. As we have seen in chapter three, school schedules could not devote more time to English and that was the main reason I advocated extra-curricular reading. In addition we were not clear about the nature of the material. I also discussed the difference between using extensive reading and class readers in chapter two. Cost and the amount of input from the organisation in setting up a programme needs long-term planning if maximum effect is desired because school and public libraries still only have a small collection of English reading materials. How schools want to approach extensive reading can also influence the teachers' role, which is different from the traditional role in a teacher-centered approach. Teachers need to become used to their new role of not imparting as much knowledge. Students, too, must become accustomed to new roles and responsibilities as learners. Because of the traditional pen-and-paper test style and the dominance of academic achievement in

Taiwan, there is little room for schools to provide other approaches to help learners, however helpful it is claimed to be. Teachers and learners in Taiwan are accustomed to intensive reading and focus on reading skills for better comprehension and thus extensive reading is a very big change in the concept of reading. In addition, the Taiwanese national curriculum (chapter three) is based on a communicative language approach and sometimes teachers may overemphasise communication skills (speaking and listening) and ignore reading and writing (Su, 1999), due to the desire to avoid the traditional grammar-translation teaching method of the past 30 years, or based on their various interpretations of the communicative language approach (Zheng, 2001). As for the latter, Grabe (1995) has argued that it is now hard to justify withholding the written form of an L2 on either theoretical or pedagogical grounds. All of the above reasons which restrict the development of ER in a foreign language context fit the context of Taiwan. Therefore, an ER programme may be more promising in terms of feasibility and achievement if schools and teachers can be involved in designing a long-term programme with resources available and a certain level of teacher guidance. It seems to me that there are still many problems to solve before the programme could really yield the positive effects that many other family extensive reading studies show. Unless these problems are taken care of, the effect of such programmes would be limited.

6.1.2 Does home reading influence the learners' English proficiency?

The learners' proficiency changed only slightly after the project. In addition to the methodological concerns of a short study period and test design, this could be related to the participants' low reading frequency. In the current project, the reading frequency was low because of the busy daily lives of the participants. It has often been hypothesised that better attitude leads to more reading, which results in some sort of improvement. However, a correlation of attitude and reading amount was not observed in the current study, as we have seen. The hypothesised relation-led improvement may be difficult to show. Low reading frequency also meant that the learners could not benefit from repeated exposure to vocabulary and possibly to chunks, which appears to be important in language learning. In chapter two, we discussed the fact that some extensive reading studies were very short in duration, and it is a question whether these would qualify as real extensive reading programmes. Although the current study lasted three and half months, learners read far less than they were required, and this potentially influenced possible improvement. Therefore, it is desirable that the participants' reading frequency be strictly controlled by either schools or researchers in future studies.

Learners' vocabulary and sentence restructuring improvement was not significant, unlike other studies (Hafiz & Tudor, 1990; Lai, 1993a; 1993b). There are several possible explanations for this. Firstly, researchers have questioned the rate of improvement of L2 vocabulary. Nation (1997) argued that extensive reading is unlikely to lead to large increases in vocabulary knowledge unless one reads a very large amount so that new words are repeated sufficiently in context to be learned (apparently 12 times is the recommended dose, based on Saragi, Nation and Meister (1978)). Having found no vocabulary learning benefits after having students in grades three to five (9-11 year-olds) engage in 23 hours of free reading, Carver and Leibert (1995) have also argued against the effectiveness of free reading as a source of vocabulary learning. It has been suggested that rates of incidental learning may have been seriously over-estimated (Duffelmeyer, 1985), that starting from a young age L1 children receive far more explicit instruction than is generally recognised (McLaughlin, 1989), and that other significant sources of vocabulary learning (e.g., conversation, study, dictionaries, news, documentaries, music etc.) have been overlooked (Rosszell, 2006). Some researchers also looked into the effect of vocabulary instruction in addition to extensive reading (e.g. Laufer, 1997; Paribakht & Wesche, 1997; Rosszell, 2006). Although vocabulary instruction is a possible solution for quick improvement, it was not considered in this study because I wanted to maintain the features of an extensive reading approach: no exercises after reading and free choice of books. Instruction was not adopted in the current study. But we must also keep in mind that it may take longer than four months and half to show any significant vocabulary improvement in an EFL context on an ER programme. Secondly and more importantly, owing to the low reading amount, learners will not have received enough input to be able to trigger much development. Thirdly, as mentioned in chapter five, what has been tested in this study was the participants' overall vocabulary ability, and thus the sampling of the tested items from the MOE curriculum word list may have influenced the results.

If vocabulary development takes a long time to develop, it may not seem strange to hypothesise that grammar development may take the same length of time or even longer. Krashen's comprehension hypothesis (Krashen, 1981; 1982; 1985) suggests that fine-tuned '*i+1*' input is essential for morpho-syntactic development. However, in this study, because learners were able to choose their own reading materials, whether they were receiving such input was not known at the time of the study. If the learners chose the 'wrong' types of books, the effect of the programme could be limited. This is why the last research question aimed to find out more about learners' book

selection.

The analyses presented in chapter five (section 5.3.4.3) suggested that the number of books at home showed a higher correlation with the children's performance than the other variables. This result supports Krashen's argument for promoting library services because it suggests a need for book availability. If one wants to read extensively, it is a huge investment if one wants to buy books all the time, compared with using library books. Therefore, readers should make good use of libraries. Krashen has been encouraging reading through asking the government to improve U.S. libraries. He claims that when books are easily available, people read more. This result supports the idea that children will benefit from extensive reading if they already have books at home because this means parents are already committed to the idea that English storybooks can be useful. Therefore, what teachers and parents can do or should be encouraged to do is start building up a home library for their children when they are young. Then, by the time the children are ten or eleven, they can be further encouraged to read and teachers can more easily set up extensive reading programmes. An alternative to a home library would be to utilise the public libraries in order to have a good stack of borrowed books at home. Unfortunately, the poor quality of the public and school libraries in the city of the present study in terms of English storybooks for young learners may become a serious obstacle to such programmes. Local government should start promoting library service, as Krashen has suggested, if they want the primary English policy to become successful.

This project showed that readers significantly outperformed non-readers on measures of morpho-syntax in terms of Organic Grammar criteria (Young-Scholten *et al.*, 2005; 2006a).⁹³ The current study is one of the few studies to use OG criteria to evaluate learners' L2 English performance. As far as I am aware, the criteria have not been used to evaluate young learners' performance in south Asia, and certainly not in Taiwan where the study took place, or in any extensive reading projects. This study showed that OG is a good proficiency measure and an alternative for English language teachers to evaluate learner proficiency or improvement in production, e.g. English composition. No presentation at the recent JALT (The Japan Association for Language Teaching) conference programme involved using OG or similar measurements for evaluation. It seemed to me that Asian researchers and teachers were still unfamiliar with this type of measurement. Therefore, I hope this study can help teachers in Taiwan to see other possibilities for evaluation.

⁹³ An alternative measure would be Rapid Profiling (Pienemann, 2001).

6.1.3 How do the children (and parents) go about the task of reading?

The interaction of the family reading group showed that parents used few techniques and fixed reading methods, which indicates that the parents need advice. Studies showed that different interaction style can influence learners' later achievement (Stoltz & Fischel, 2003) and that the variety of activities is important (Wood, 2002). Dialogic-reading techniques were argued to initiate learning through wh-questions and discussions, leading children to active learning which results in achievement (Hargrave & Sénéchal, 2000). Parents need knowledge of this approach and how to implement it at home. This is best provided from the school or the local government, since the guidebook in the study failed to help. Unless the parents can provide the right kind of help, any such project will have a limited effect.

Parental involvement had limited influence on the children in the present study. The parents did not seem to be able to motivate the child participants, although the children demonstrated good attitudes towards the study. Some parents even acted as deterrents. The affective filter (Krashen, 1981; 1982) here did not seem to be lowered in the parent-child interaction. It is thus not surprising that the child participants had a range of opinions about parents' company. Gardner (1985) and Colletta, Clément and Edwards (1983) argued that parents play two roles which impact on their children's motivation in their children's learning process: the active role and the passive role (section 2.5.3). In the present study, the parents played neither of them and thus were unlikely to have influenced their children. It seems that children's motivation might come from somewhere else, which could be a sense of achievement or enjoyment of the books. This is the sort of intrinsic motivation that can develop a life-long love of reading (sections 2.5.1.3, 2.5.1.4, and 2.5.3). In addition, parents did not have time to read or to adopt any of the activities in the guidebook, which led to lack of variety of activities and interaction styles.

Many parents in Taiwan think that it is better to leave the teaching job to cram schools than do it themselves (Chai, 2001; Chang, 2003). Although it is a cultural tradition that parents in Taiwan have great concern about their children's school performance, how much they want to be involved in their children's education is still unclear. I would suspect that a very large part of this may be parents' lack of confidence in their own English. If this programme had taken place at school, I expect that some teachers who were not English majors or who perceived themselves to have lower English proficiency may have faced the same problem. These parents and teachers want to

save face and thus may rely on others to do the job for them. The industry of cram schools has been prosperous in the Taiwanese education system for a long time and this wish to save face when confronted with extra-school help may be one of the main reasons. At the end of the study, I ran an experimental multiple regression analysis based on the variables in this study, hoping to find out which variables played the most important roles. The dependent variable was the post-test vocabulary and sentence restructuring scores, and the independent variables included attitude, total number of reading sessions, cram school hours, and number of books at home. The results suggested that cram school hours did appear to be the most influential variable (see Appendix 44). This is not a surprising finding, because generally speaking, children who go to cram schools receive more input than those who do not.⁹⁴ Based on our assumption that more input is better, this result is expected. I did not include this variable in my research for several reasons. Firstly, cram school as a variable would be a very complex one because, as far as I know, each school has their own syllabus, if there is a syllabus at all. Many other factors would also need to be involved, including teachers, materials, instruction language, instruction hours, teaching methods, and even assignments from the cram schools. H. Wang (2004) investigated the relationship between background differences of primary learners' parents and their choices of cram schools for their children through quantitative analysis of questionnaires (see also Hung, 2005; Tsai, 2006). Secondly, the reason for the present study is to promote parents' involvement in their children's learning. I continue to think that parents can do more, or should try to do more if they also expect teachers or schools to work harder to help their children. Parents need to know more about their children's English learning so they can co-operate with the schools more effectively (Branston & Provis, 1999; Epstein, 1990; Freebody & Freiberg, 2001; Minns, 1997; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002; Shapiro *et al.*, 1997; Smith, Joint Committee on Parents and Reading., International Reading Association. & National Congress of Parents and Teachers., 1971; Smith *et al.*, 1996b; Smith & Elley, 1998; Solomon, 1990b; Stegelin, 2003; Stern & Weinrib, 1977).

The recorded sessions suggested many participants struggled to read, even with their parents, and as we know, most participants chose books randomly, and the input they provided usually seemed to be too much above the learners' levels in both vocabulary and grammar. The rate of known words seemed so low that the learners probably could not understand the books. However, whether the learners did understand the books was not something to look at in this study because it would need a more careful

⁹⁴ I am assuming there must be some learners who were placed at the wrong level of cram school classes and could not receive input. Also, there must be some who were unwilling to pay attention to cram school classes because they were passively sent there by their parents.

design than the data I had from the present study. In terms of grammar, Krashen's '*i+1*' hypothesis was also tested, using OG criteria for book categorisation. The participants, however, did not read books at the right level either: only six of the 29 reading participants chose '*i+1*' books. This could also have resulted from the fact that the availability of books was skewed, as there were more level three and above books than level one or two. Since most of the participants in the experimental groups did not receive comprehensible input at *i + 1*, it is not surprising that the improvement was insignificant. A better study design in the future could be treating the participants with '*i+1*' books using OG criteria to see if learners receive the right input make more progress.

In addition to investigating vocabulary and morpho-syntactic level of the books in the present study, how learners comprehend text above sentential level might have also been investigated. L2 texts may not always be organised in ways that match students' L1 reading experiences. For example, (a) the ways in which texts express interpersonal relations with the reader (e.g. the use of 'I' and 'you' as pronouns), (b) expectations about the amount of new information that is embedded in a text (e.g. the use of many nominalizations), and (c) assumptions about how explicitly reader interpretation should be guided (e.g. with supporting details, descriptions and explanations) (Grabe & Stoller, 2002:60-61). L2 readers need to learn to recognise and use text structure signalling devices and discourse organization (Grabe & Stoller, 2002:80) that differs from their L1 (see 2.4.2.3). Therefore, a future study could look not only at the level at which books are written in terms of sentences, i.e. *i + 1*, but also at discourse factors, in promoting linguistic development and at learners' skills in making use of these, since learning about the signalling words in the L2 text could also be considered as readers' *i + 1* input for L2 knowledge.

This is also the first time OG measurement has been used to categorise book selection in an extensive reading approach. Regarding book levels, The Edinburgh Project on Extensive Reading (EPER) set up a reference standard of eight levels for reading materials. Hill (2008) and Waring (2008) are both working on level scales for graded readers from different publishers and series. This is very important for extensive reading researchers because the publishers typically have different standards for their series. Publishers also use terms like 'simple' grammar and 'complex' grammar (Young-Scholten & Ijuin, 2006a), but the definition of these terms is not really clear. Using OG criteria, we can have a clear definition of the grammar levels of books, which I argue is better than the definitions of any publisher. Although a morpho-syntactic measurement like OG has not been used for book classification

before, it worked very well in this study and thus could usefully provide teachers with an additional method for book selection.

The overall study results do support the assumption that the exposure to written input in the form of story books had an influence on children's proficiency. The findings support Krashen's claims that reading helps language development and in free voluntary reading (e.g. 1993; 2004b). The study thus enables teachers and schools to see why and how extra-curricular target language reading needs to be promoted in the long term. Finding time for extensive reading is a matter of priorities. If parents, teachers and administrators support the notion of the young learners becoming fluent, independent readers in the L2, then time will be found, even if it is only ten minutes a day.

Taiwanese parents' perception of family reading clearly needs adjustment. Parents should understand that family reading in the target language not only facilitates language learning but also contributes in some way to the child's attitude towards English reading/learning. Clearly, whether parents should be involved in home reading at all needs more consideration, since there were few differences between the family reading group and the reading alone group.

6.2 Limitations and suggestions for future study

Although this study addresses some general aspects of L2 learning, it was not possible to include all the variables investigated in previous research, given the differences in research purpose, questions and methodology. Therefore the study has some limitations.

For example, researchers such as Long (1981; 1983) and Harley and Swain (1984) have argued that interaction is necessary as well as comprehensible input in L2 learning. Researchers (e.g. Beals & De Temple, 1992; De Temple & Tabors, 1995; Otto & John, 1994; Stoltz & Fischel, 2003) have listed different styles of interaction (such as straight readers, standard interactive readers, non-readers and recitation readers (De Temple & Tabors, 1995)) and, since interaction is thought to influence achievement (Stoltz & Fischel, 2003), it is recommended that family reading interaction style and achievement be investigated. This can also show whether learners benefit from passive reading alone or whether interaction, and their own output, is necessary and in what quantity it is necessary. As mentioned at the end of chapter two before the research questions, just having parents who read, or having

books around the house alone does not motivate children to read. It depends on how the parents and their children interact with the material sources that are available. Even though researchers cannot be sure which type of interaction is the best (Baker *et al.*, 2001), researchers generally suggest that parents involve children in content discussion and encourage them to use more advanced and more complex language skills (De Temple & Tabors, 1995). Beals and De Temple (1992) suggest that parents should use high-level/high-demand strategy to interact with their children through non-immediate talk. Future researchers could design a study to compare learners' proficiency improvement of groups using high-level/high-demand strategy and low-level/low-demand strategy during joint reading, comparing to a group of independent readers. The variable of interaction was not considered in this study as it would have required more invasive observation. Extra-curricular activities are notoriously difficult to control and monitor. However, while close observation was ruled out as it would have stressed the participants, indirect observations from reading logs, tapes and interviews were used but we saw that they may not reveal real practices. An immediate interview after reading might have revealed more psychological and cognitive information or problems during reading. This, however, would require a different – more qualitative – methodological approach.

Although parent-child reading seems to belong to social activity in general, we did not see much interaction or social activity when the readings were tracked. While I might have focused on social changes in the children's behaviour, this would have required more qualitative data collection and from the data collected for the present study, this issue could not be investigated. Furthermore, I suspect that the learners did not interact any differently from the way they normally do, because the reading recordings were similar to the un-intervened pilot study family reading styles.

To help parents and children read, future studies should involve a parent training programme by schools for them to acquire various reading instruction skills and techniques. The participants would then integrate this reading activity into their daily life more easily. It was also difficult to ask learners to read as frequently as possible without forcing them to. As pointed out above, the result was that the reading frequency of some learners was so low that it casts doubt on the idea of 'frequent extensive reading'. A study with a more carefully controlled amount of reading is necessary to understand how learners benefit from extensive reading. Future researchers might also want to investigate if there is a threshold amount of reading to trigger vocabulary and morpho-syntactic development.

This study is one of the few family reading L2 English studies in Taiwan and thus should be considered as an initial investigation. A short study period is less likely to show significant changes and thus a longer study may reveal more progress. Therefore, it is recommended that the future research period be at least one year. In this way, the participants, the researcher and schools can also build better rapport and also obtain clearer results. If such a study lasts for one year or even longer, perhaps we will be able to observe the process of learners' attitude and behaviour changes, the development of their reading skills (which I did not look at in this study at all), or, in the worst case scenario, a disappearance of interest.

One of the limitations of this thesis was not providing a thorough analysis of the books that the children were reading in terms of the grammar levels and vocabulary. However, not much research has been done in this area, not even in the area of extensive reading. It also relates to another limitation on the relationship between book selection and learner proficiency or progress. A thorough analysis of the relationship between these two variables was not provided in this study and should be pursued in the future. I would encourage future researchers to produce their own readers which are carefully controlled for appropriate (*i+1*) input regarding vocabulary and grammar, so we can rigorously test Krashen's comprehension hypothesis.

Reading is closely tied to both linguistic competence and exposure to print (Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Guthrie, Wigfield & Von Secker, 2000). A major difference between L1 and L2 reading is the total amount of exposure to L2 reading and to L2 print that a learner experiences. L1 readers spend years building up the amount of exposure to print needed to develop the required fluency and automaticity in word and syntactic processing. Most L2 readers are not exposed to enough L2 print to build fluent processing (Koda, 1996; Lundberg, 1999), nor do they have enough exposure to build a large recognition vocabulary. However, fluent and automatic reading involves a set of underlying skills and processes that are activated as we read (2.4.2.3). Comprehension is a feat of balancing and coordinating many abilities in a complex and rapid set of routines that makes this a seemingly effortless and enjoyable activity for fluent readers (Birch, 2002; Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Macaro, 2003). However, these processes do not operate efficiently or effortlessly when readers encounter texts or tasks too difficult for them. Readers might not have adequate background information, the necessary linguistic resources or might not have read enough in the L2 to have developed efficiencies in reading (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). Although improvement in reading skills could result in progress in language learning, it is

generally considered that learners can only apply and then improve these skills when their language is above the threshold level (Alderson, 1984; Coady & Huckin, 1997) (section 2.4.2). In short, while there were mainly three key factors which would affect reading: (the readers' linguistic knowledge, the world knowledge and proficiency), the present study only concerned proficiency. Reading skills as a factor was excluded because it would have involved many other variables, which did not directly relate to the topic of this thesis (extra-curricular exposure and proficiency), e.g. L1 reading skills, text difficulty, skill training experience, individual variation.

In fact, in the literature on extensive reading it is rare to find studies of the effect of ER which look at individuals' reading skills. Most are interested in increase in amount of reading (e.g. Cohen, 1997; Pilgreen & Krashen, 1993; Rodrigo *et al.*, 2007; Tse, 1996) or in its relationship to general language improvement (e.g. Lee, Krashen & Gribbons, 1996; Mason & Krashen, 1997; Pigada & Schmitt, 2006; Shin, 2001). This may be because when it comes to reading skills, there are standardised tests to distinguish levels if the research is conducted in, for example, the USA. For L2 English, standardised tests can be used in immersion settings, where they might be valid, whereas in Taiwan, the validity of these standardized tests could be questioned. But we do know that the learners in the present study were beginners following the national curriculum and were assumed to be just at the threshold level (see 4.7) As they were expected to be able to do, they read English textbooks in class and participated in other activities which required ish bottom-up skills and comprehension.

From the study results, it was concluded that all of the children in the group, even with the effect of cram schools, which teach similarly to how regular schools teach, might be at a higher level. It may be useful in a future study, or if I were to carry out this study again, to look in detail at each child's reading skills at the start and end of the study. If I were to do this, I might discover that they do not actually have the basic reading skills to be able to use reading as a source of input. I would also be able to look at whether their readings skills improve and how this improvement relates to their oral proficiency progress. Given that the learners had basic phonics skills, as stated above, the skills undergoing improvement would have related to syntax and to discourse. For the former, I did measure this, but in a more global sense, using Organic Grammar. I could have measured comprehension, but no one has come up with a successful test that measures comprehension of the inflectional morphology involved in OG. The latter is an interesting topic for future studies.

Furthermore, future researchers can investigate how children choose books more closely. For instance, on what basis do children choose books in the beginning? If they start from the wrong level of books, do they gradually move towards the right choice of books? If so, why and how do they know what to choose? In this present study, I also looked briefly at whether children like real books more than graded readers. It is worth investigating if children know the difference between these two types of books and which they prefer with more data. In addition, the record of the learners borrowing log of the classroom library in the present study and their reading records was incomplete and confusing. Therefore, future study could investigate the use of audiotapes with the storybooks during home reading and how it influences the learners' proficiency.

When it comes to motivation, Dörnyei (2001:79) argued that teachers play a significant role in shaping this in general. Clark & Trafford (1995) found that teachers and students both regard the teacher-pupil relationship as the most significant variable affecting students' attitudes towards L2 learning. Noels, Clément & Pelletier (1999) also provided empirical evidence of the fact that the teacher-motivation relationship is rather complex and most studies of the appraisals of the teacher through scales such as Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) (Gardner, 1985) (section 2.5.3) can capture only a limited amount of the variance in the teacher's motivational impact. While the arguments of these studies are probably correct about the importance of the teacher, the teacher factor was not considered in the present study. As mentioned in section 4.7, although the form tutor/homeroom teacher was interested in primary English education, she did not promote English *per se* in any school activities. The child participants from the three classes all had the same English subject teacher, who was not involved in the study. The two experimental groups were in the same class and thus received the same attention from me. Therefore, there should be no teacher factor in this study. I should probably have given the same attention to the control group children; however, I could not be sure if my appearance would evoke their interest in reading. Moreover, although I did not think my appearance would have an influence on the control group children's English proficiency, I did not want to take the risk and thus decided to keep minimum contact with the control group.

The study originally started with the idea that parents may also be able to benefit from the joint reading in terms of their own proficiency. However, the idea was abandoned in the main study because of the low return rate of tests and the monitoring difficulty in the pilot study. This idea still deserves investigating because, with some empirical evidence, parents may be motivated more if they themselves could benefit from the

programme.

When I set up this thesis, based on my baseline study and pilot study results, I thought that parents might be motivated to improve their own English along with the children's English. These parents know some English because they had taken English in their obligatory high school years. However, they may feel only a little of the ownership of their English. One indication of this is parents not reading the guidebook which may be passive resistance to attempting to do was expected of them. While their non-reading of certainly relates to the fact that they did not have time to read or even to their dislike of its style (page 231), I would argue that this was because they did not feel ownership⁹⁵ of their English. It is highly possible that they feel disempowered as imperfect and thus 'bad' language users and given this self-perceived lack of competence, they did not want to lose face in front of their children by attempting the activities. This has to be related to the issue of the role of English in Taiwan. English evokes feelings of anxiety, as in many foreign language contexts, because second language learners are expected to be perfect speakers. Learners are expected to be nativelike or are judged to be incompetently bad and they cannot simply be neutral users. This may also be the reason why only a few parents were willing to participate in the study and why some parents were absent in the audio recordings.

A well-designed theory-based model is necessary for deeper understanding of reading. In the present study, I mainly used correlation analysis to investigate relationships between two variables. A better design could include building a model between the variables, e.g. attitude and achievement, or frequency, attitude, behaviour and achievement with causal relationships. With the model, multiple regression analysis and path analysis could be used to investigate the relationships among the variables and know which variables have the greatest impact. This way we can know better about the causal relationship between variables, which would be of tremendous pedagogical value. This means of analysis has not yet been used in extensive reading studies, as far as I am aware. An example model using some of the variables in this study is given in the following figure. In the figure, each box represents a variable. An arrow stands for a possible causal relationship; the pointed side is the cause. A double-sided arrow signifies an unclear causal relationship.

⁹⁵ However, any further discussion on the ownership of the English will be outside the scope of this thesis.

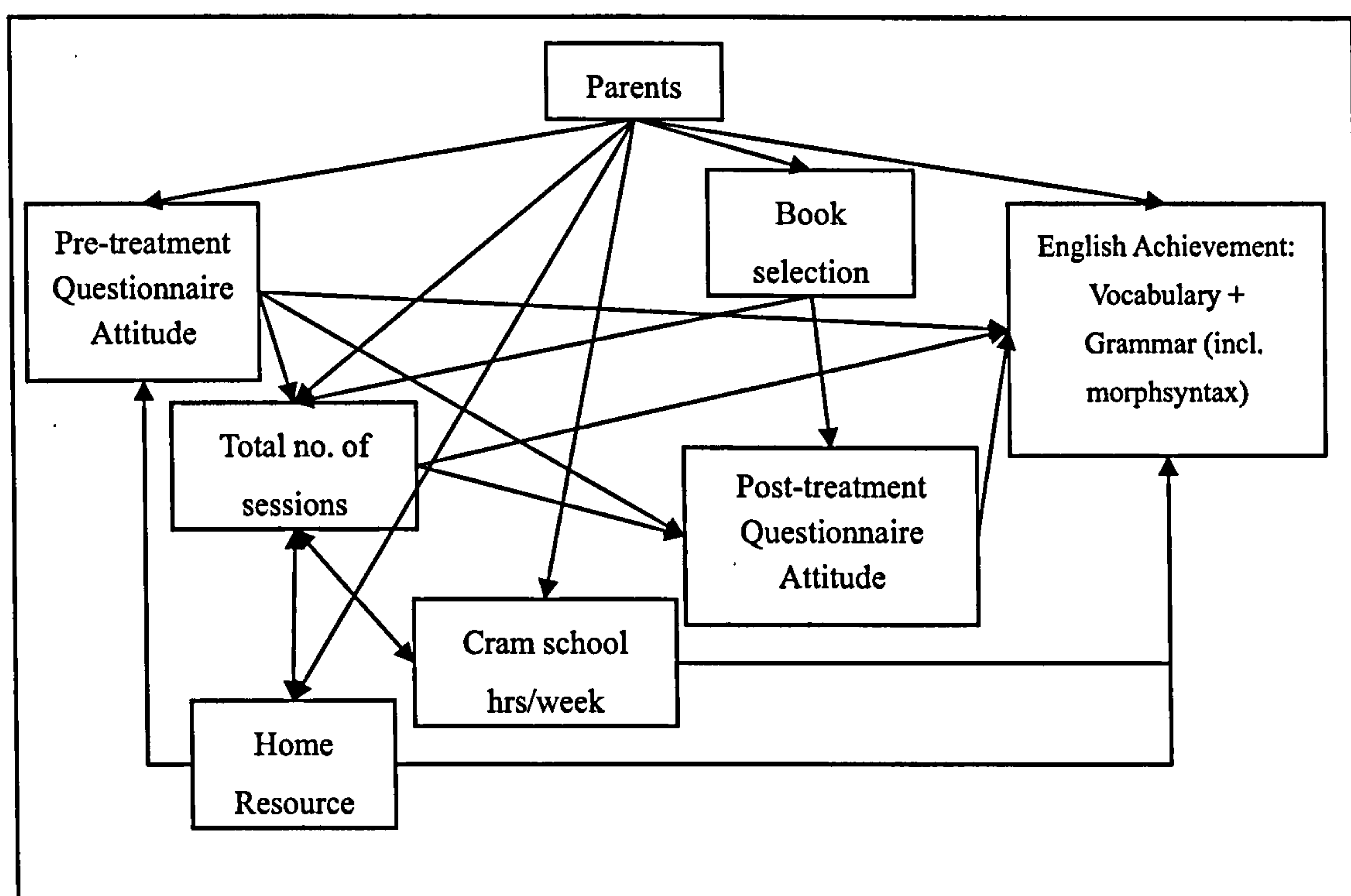


Figure 6.1 Example model

Lastly, whether or not learners at all stages can benefit from extensive reading was not fully investigated in the present study because most of the learners were beginners. Theoretically all learners should benefit; however, learners at various stages may benefit differently. In the present study, higher level learners seemed to benefit more than the lower level ones. Nonetheless, the lower level learners also benefited from the study, and this could be because they had more books at their levels (section 5.3.4.3). Krashen (2001) and Davis (1988) argue that reading (specifically sustained silent reading in Davis' context) may show the most gains for less mature readers because its aim is to interest them in outside reading in the first place. Those who are already dedicated readers will not show such dramatic gains. Future research can also investigate the variable of learner stage in extensive reading or home reading.

6.3 Conclusion

Although I attempted to use an ecological approach in the study and also to reduce interference, I was not able to remain unengaged. In order to make the programme sustainable, my visits to school and involvement with parents by way of reminding or supporting them led me away from an ecological approach. As a researcher, I was hoping the programme would change parents' behaviour. I had expectations that the parents would show certain behaviours during the programme; however, they did not.

I was not able to influence them through the methods I used, which were based on the family reading literature and extensive reading literature. Again, this may involve a cultural factor which is something that policy makers and future researchers should consider.

I went to considerable trouble to provide all possible help, even with a guidebook and online discussion resource, to parents and I found it frustrating that the parents did not even read the guidebook. Nonetheless, I still think it is a valuable resource whose use should be further investigated with, for example, teachers who could adopt the activities for use t school. I would also like to pursue the effect of the guidebook, when it is actually read and used. An interesting observation is that although the decision of writing a guidebook for parents was based on the pilot study, since the guide was of no use to the parents in the main study, one cannot assume a pilot study always guarantees the success of the main study.

One thing I have learned from this thesis is that even growing up in a culture and thinking that you know it perfectly well, when you step into a different role and look at it as a researcher, you discover so much more. It took research for me to understand my own culture and my lack of knowledge in certain areas. Important issues like how much the Taiwanese society depends on the cram school education, how that influences the Taiwanese learners, how Taiwanese parents react when they are asked to be involved in something beyond exams, namely their children's reading, what materials the Taiwanese learners were reading, what problems (regarding resources and time) there will be are all factors that policy makers need to consider. Based on my study results, I suggest that the policy makers consider raising school teachers' awareness of the importance of reading in English and ask them to find some time for English reading at school and then encourage learners to read at home too. My reason for this is that since my findings show it is not easy to promote reading straight from promoting extra-curricular reading, it may be worth trying to start with school reading, which does not currently exist in the curriculum for Taiwanese primary level students. Teachers have tremendous influence on their students at the primary level and thus may form learners' reading habits more easily. However, this is under the condition that there will be appropriate and abundant books for the learners. Therefore, future education budgets should consider increasing the amount of library money for schools if they want to help learners in the long run. Equally importantly, policy makers should work with the professionals on the appropriate books with regard to the contents and text discourse.

If I were to carry out a study with the same aim, there are a few points I would change. On the methodological level, first, the programme would last a year, as Krashen (2004b; 2005c; 2007a) has suggested, rather than a few months. Letting the form tutor lead the programme could be an option, and regular family reading group meetings/book meetings could sustain the programme for longer and integrate it into the curriculum. On implementation, using videos (rather than less revealing audio recordings) or demonstrations at school to show parents how to jointly read with their children could be a better option than a guidebook. There is also the need for more interviews with the participants during their reading and after the readings too. Using factor analysis and regression to show directions and power between variables would reveal much more important information than correlation analysis in the study. Furthermore, I realize it would be very useful to obtain both qualitative and quantitative information about the learners' reading skills of decoding and comprehension (section 4.7). This sort of information could be gathered in a much longer study.

The present study showed providing extra-curricular input through reading English storybooks extensively does improve learners' proficiency and is feasible. The study also showed that one can directly test two of Krashen's hypotheses. The Input Hypothesis was tested by using Organic Grammar Criteria not only to measure learner's morpho-syntactic proficiency but also to determine the level of the story books the children interacted with. In addition, the Affective Filter Hypothesis was supported in that there was a significant positive correlation between learners' attitude and proficiency. The study also revealed the importance of considering the choice of books and revealed that young learners frequently are unable to choose the right books for themselves. Disappointingly, reading did not result in improvement on two other measures: vocabulary or sentence restructuring ability. Nor did the treatment help parents in the family reading group to deal with joint reading. There are still many issues remaining both uninvestigated and undiscussed here because of the time involved in the study as well as length limit of a PhD thesis. It is my hope that the findings of this thesis make a small contribution to the field of second language acquisition and it is my wish that I can continue to work on better understanding young English learners, modern foreign language learning/acquisition.

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